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THOUGHTS

OF

FAVOURED HOURS,

UPON

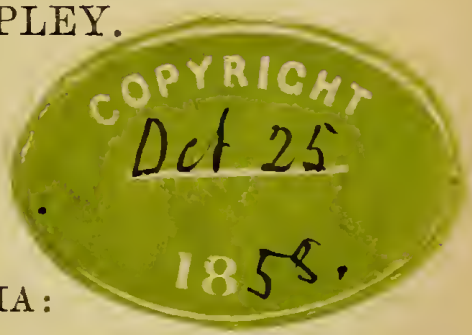
Bible Incidents and Characters,

AND

OTHER SUBJECTS.

"While I was musing the fire burned."—Ps. xxxix. 3.

BY JOSIAH COPLEY.



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PREFACE.

EVERY Christian knows that there are FAVOURED HOURS, when Truth shines with more than usual brightness, and when both the head and the heart find it to be a relief rather than a labour to express thought, whether with the tongue or the pen. It was at such seasons that the papers composing this little volume were written.

The writer's object was rather to suggest than to elaborate thought; to lead the mind of his reader a little aside from the beaten paths of religious discussion; to find some untrodden spots in the green pastures where the Good Shepherd leads his flock; at the same time keeping carefully within their boundaries.

A glance at the index will show that the work is, in the fullest sense of the word, miscellaneous; that it takes a wide range; and that it is what it was intended to be,—a companion for a leisure or a lonely hour, a book for the centre-table, the parlour-window, or the bed-chamber. Those minor questions which divide evangelical Christians into distinctive sects and parties are not touched.

KITTANNING, PA., August, 1858.

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THOUGHTS OF FAVOURED HOURS.

Cornelius.

In the days of Christ and his apostles, Judea was a subjugated province of the Roman Empire, and the power of the subordinate rulers under the Emperor was maintained by numerous garrisons of soldiers. These soldiers constituted the police of the country, and were the agents in executing sentence upon persons condemned to death or to corporeal punishment. A band of soldiers crucified the Saviour; and when Peter was confined in prison he slept between two soldiers. Over this scattered police-soldiery there were many officers, called centurions. They were competent to command one hundred men, as the name indicates, although it

is not probable that the number under their command was often full.

Four centurions are distinctly mentioned in the New Testament, and all favourably. The one who applied to our Lord to heal his servant, and who exhibited such admirable humility and faith. "Lord," said he, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word, and my servant shall live." The second in order is the one who attended upon the crucifixion of the Saviour, and who, seeing the natural prodigies which attended his death, smote upon his breast, exclaiming, "Surely this was the Son of God!" The third is Cornelius, of whom we propose to speak; and the fourth is the one who treated Paul so courteously on his voyage to Rome. That such excellence of character should be found among military men, heathens, is well calculated to disarm prejudice and check harsh, undiscriminating judgment upon entire classes. And such susceptibility to divine truth and sacred impressions as we find manifested by these men is well calculated to inspire hope in reference to the entire Gentile world, the great majority of whom are yet ignorant of the Saviour.

What was Cornelius? That he was a Roman military officer we have already seen. But what was his condition as a religious man? Was he a heathen? No; for his residence in Palestine had made him in some measure acquainted with the true God, and him he feared and worshipped sincerely and fervently. He is called a devout man,—one who feared God and prayed to him always. Was he a proselyte to Judaism? No; for, had he been so, Peter would not have hesitated to enter into his house and hold communion with him in worship. What, then, was he? In his outward relations he was a heathen; but in his heart he was, according to the light he had, a true worshipper of the God of Israel; for we are told that his prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God. His condition, when we first hear of him, is an anomalous one; but he is nevertheless one of the most highly-favoured of men, —chosen in the adorable sovereignty of God to be the first-born of many brethren, the forerunner of a multitude of redeemed ones that no man can number, redeemed from the Gentile world. In his person the middle wall of partition was broken down between Jews and Gentiles. In his house they both

became one in Christ Jesus. In his house that door was opened that can never again be shut until the consummation of all things, when the dread proclamation shall be made, "He that is holy, let him be holy still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still,"—that door through which we have entered into the kingdom of heaven, if indeed we are partakers of it at all. Viewed in this light, the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is a narrative of exceeding interest. What the call of Abraham was to the Hebrews the call and conversion of Cornelius is to us Gentiles. He is our representative, our forerunner, our exemplar.

Cornelius was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house; which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." "Why," exclaims the superficial reader, "here is a man who was every whit a Christian, especially when it is added that his prayers and alms had come up with acceptance in the sight of God." But no; he was not a Christian yet. He was a devout man, a praying man, a benevolent man; and doubtless these virtues which shone so resplendent in his character were the genuine fruits of the Holy Spirit, who was leading

him in the right path, but had not yet led him to Christ; and, in order to complete the good work which he had begun, it was necessary that he should be further instructed. To this end an angel is sent to him; and what did the angel say? Did he tell Cornelius of the Saviour? Not at all. He makes not the most remote allusion to him. Although angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, and have often been the agents in imparting to men important revelations, they are not permitted to preach the gospel. This distinguished honour is given to men; this treasure is contained in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of God; to men, who have themselves been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ,—men who by faith are made partakers of Christ, and are more intimately allied to him than angels can be,—men who, through the wondrous agency of redeeming grace, are made one with Christ, participants in his righteousness and his glory,—it is given to make known to their fallen brethren the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to open to them the kingdom of heaven. The angel bore to Cornelius a message of divine commendation, and then added, "Send men to Joppa, and call for one

Simon, whose surname is Peter: . . . *he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.*" Thus we see that the piety of Cornelius was good as far as it went, but that it was deficient. Such a religion, had it stopped here, could not have saved him. This Cornelius knew; and doubtless his unceasing prayer was for more light; and his prayer was abundantly answered.

"Send men to Joppa," said the angel. The command was one that Cornelius could easily obey, for he was a man in authority, having soldiers under him. He could say to one, Go, and he went, and to another, Do this, and it was done. All God's commands are reasonable and just. "Go wash in the pool of Siloam," said Jesus to the blind man. This *he* could do without difficulty, although it might have been out of his power to "send men to Joppa." "Wash seven times in Jordan," is the sovereign command of Elisha to Naaman the Syrian, as the condition of his being recovered of his leprosy. Naaman's pride for a time revolted at the thought of so simple a prescription; but Cornelius was not for one moment disobedient to the heavenly vision. "Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter." "*One*

Simon." The expression plainly denotes that Cornelius, until that moment, was entirely ignorant of the existence of the man who is thus appointed to be his teacher; nor does the angel tell him any thing about him, save that he lodged at the house of another Simon, a tanner, whose house was by the seaside. He is not informed that Simon is a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, who had recently been crucified at Jerusalem; in short, he was left in profound ignorance as to the nature of the instructions he was to receive; yet he staggered not at the command, nor at the promise that he should tell him what he ought to do. His obedience, therefore, was very similar to that of Abraham when he complied with the divine command to leave his kindred and his native country and sojourn in a land which God would show him,—"not knowing whither he went."

"Send *men* to Joppa." How many? That is left to Cornelius himself; but there must be more than one. He sent three; but had he seen proper to send twelve his obedience would have been equally good, but no better. Send *men*, not *a man;* send men, not *a letter* or *a message.* Thus we see the obedience of Cornelius was perfect, although the number

of his messengers was left discretionary. God has left many things pertaining to the means of grace to the wisdom and discretion of his people.

While the men were on their journey, God was preparing Peter for the discharge of a new and strange duty. He was a Jew, and was strongly tinctured with Jewish prejudices. By them the nations of the Gentile world were regarded as outcasts, as unclean and accursed. During the ages of the Mosaic economy—nay, from the call of Abraham—they had been a separate and peculiar people; but that wise and righteous interdiction against their mingling with their idolatrous neighbours had degenerated into an unholy and inveterate prejudice,—a prejudice so deep-rooted that it required a wondrous allegorical vision to remove it from the mind of even an inspired apostle. But the same Spirit which was carrying on a good work in the heart of Cornelius, and preparing him to embrace the Saviour, thus taught Peter that he erred when he supposed that salvation was confined to his nation. All things being thus arranged, the apostle accompanied the messengers of Cornelius promptly and without gainsaying.

When Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius, the latter exhibited a trace of heathenism in falling at the feet of the apostle and worshipping him as a demigod. No doubt Cornelius supposed that a being of whom an angel is sent from heaven to apprize him must necessarily be divine. Peter having corrected this mistake and checked this incipient idolatry, they all went in together and made up what was certainly one of the most interesting worshipping assemblies ever seen in this world. Cornelius, having learned to regard his guest and teacher as a fellow-man, then rehearsed, in calm and dignified language, the particulars of the vision with which he had been favoured. While Cornelius spoke, a new and grand idea burst upon the mind of Peter; and at the close of the remarks of his Gentile friend he exclaims, in accents of astonishment and adoration, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." Thus that door which had for ages debarred the Gentile, as such, from the Church of God on earth, and upon whose ponderous bolts and bars the rust of almost two thousand years had accumulated,

is thrown open, and Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, mingle in delightful harmony at the feet of their common Saviour and Lord, and are baptized with the same water and the same Spirit. It was a great and glorious event; and all its concomitants were in perfect keeping, and are as instructive as they are delightful.

"*I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,*" said Christ to Peter. Do we not, in the great events which occurred on the day of Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius, see him discharging the grand and mysterious commission he then received? On the first occasion his proclamation was, "Ye *men of Israel*, hear these words;" and then he set before them an open door, through which thousands of them immediately pressed for safety and salvation. And in the house of Cornelius we behold him wielding another key, at the use of which he himself seems to be startled. Thus was it given to that illustrious man to open the kingdom of heaven to both Jews and Gentiles.

The Holy Ghost, we are informed, accompanied the words of the apostle; and Cornelius and his company believed the gospel, embraced the Saviour, were made partakers

of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, united with their Jewish brethren in the high praises of their common God and Saviour, and were baptized, and thus fully inducted into the Christian Church.

In this transaction two great truths are held up for our contemplation and encouragement. The first is, that the honest, earnest seeker for truth is sure to find it. Such was Cornelius. That is a precious promise which declares that "to the upright light shall arise in the darkness." Cornelius was a devout man even while immersed in almost heathenish darkness. His devotion was honest and sincere, and his works were good. When he is first introduced to us he is in a transition-state. God has begun a good work in his heart; but it is imperfect. He is a good man, but not a Christian. He is near the kingdom of God, but not yet in it. It were impious to suppose that Cornelius, or any other man in like condition, could be left without further light. In some way or other, God, whose work is always perfect, will see to it that the sincere seeker of truth and salvation shall find them; and that man makes a perilous assertion who says that he has sought for the truth and failed to find it.

The second great truth taught here is that prayers, even such as come up with acceptance before God, and alms, even though well-pleasing in the sight of Heaven, are not sufficient of themselves to secure salvation. Good a man as Cornelius was, it was necessary that Christ should be revealed to him, and that he should believe in him and trust in him for salvation. What now becomes of the moralist, who thinks to secure the divine favour and mercy upon the strength of his blameless life and his active benevolence? He has heard of Christ, but he imagines he does not need him. Did Cornelius need the Saviour,—this man of devotion, of prayer, and of charity to the poor? Certainly he did; else why send men to Joppa for one Simon, who should tell him what to do? Was he not doing well? Did not an angel from heaven assure him that his prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God? and yet Peter must come and tell him what to do! Oh! if Cornelius's works could not save him, whose can? But Cornelius, with all his devotion, with all his alms, was a sinner, and needed to be washed in the blood of Christ,—needed to be united to him by a living faith. He, and the thief on the cross, and the jailer

of Philippi, must all be saved in the same way; and this day their united voices blend in the song, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Mission and Poverty of Christ.

THE advent of Christ is the great event in the annals of time. It is not one event among many, but the CENTRE to which all other events are subsidiary, and for which the race of man exists.

He came, heralded by a train of prophets reaching from Enoch, before the flood, to the Baptist, who pointed out the humble Galilean to the people of Israel as "the Lamb of God." Their lofty strains had awakened in the breasts of the people of that generation a confident expectation that He of whom Moses and the prophets wrote would shortly appear; but when he did come they knew him not. They looked for a mighty temporal

Prince, a Deliverer of Israel, a Restorer of its kingdom. Their views were carnal, earthly, and contracted. Indeed, it was impossible for them to conceive of such a kingdom as he did establish. Their preconceptions were altogether natural; but their fault lay in their obstinate adherence to their erroneous preconceptions after Jesus of Nazareth had, by mighty signs and wonders, attested his claim to be that great One whose coming they expected and longed for. But, because he did not appear in the *manner* they had expected, they rejected him, shutting their eyes against the clearest light of truth and evidence.

The Son of God, who had control of all things in heaven and in earth, had it in his power to take any condition in life that he chose. He could have been rich. He could have clothed himself with outward majesty transcending that of the mightiest monarchs. He could have brought all mankind to his feet as vassals and servants, and laid all nations under tribute; and, had he done so, the preconceptions of the Jews would have been met. He had it in his power to invest himself with the terrors of God, as Moses and Elijah were invested; but that would not have comported

with the nature of his mission. Moses was a representative of the sovereignty and authority of the Almighty; Elijah, of his severity,—for in him it was proclaimed, not in words, but in deeds, that "our God is a consuming fire;" but Jesus was the embodiment of his love. He came, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He came to seek and to save that which was lost; to heal the broken-hearted; to bear the sins of many; and to bring in an everlasting righteousness.

He had power to take any condition in life that he chose; and, being guided by unerring wisdom, his choice would necessarily be a good one. He was born of a poor woman, became a member of an obscure family, for whose maintenance, together with his own, he laboured with his hands until he was about thirty years of age. So completely did he veil his divinity that he was only known as "the carpenter's son," and as a carpenter himself.

The signs and wonders which had been shown at his birth seem to have been forgotten. Good old Simeon, and Anna the prophetess, and Zacharias the priest, are dead. The shepherds who heard the angels sing

are perhaps dead or scattered; but they might have adopted the language of the prophet and exclaimed, "Who hath believed our report?" The wise men had long since gone back to their homes in the East, there to meditate upon the mysterious nature of the Star and the Babe of Bethlehem, until they should be called up higher, where, with still more exceeding joy, they should gaze upon, and contemplate, and adore the glory and beauty of the Star of Jacob.

But the whole nation of Israel lay in profound ignorance of the fact that He for whose coming they had so long waited was even then among them. The wonders which attended his birth, the words of the aged Simeon, the predictions of Anna, the slaughter of the children,—all, all had passed out of the popular mind; and thus the *Shiloh* of Jacob, the *Prophet* of Moses, the *Star* of Balaam, the *Man of Sorrows* of Isaiah, the *Messiah* of Daniel, the *Branch* of Zechariah, the *Sun of Righteousness* of Malachi, lay hidden from the gaze of the world in the humble mechanic of Nazareth. Yet he did not hide his light; for, although we have an account of but one single incident in his life from infancy to mature manhood,—the interview, at the age

of twelve years, with the doctors in the temple,—that is enough to show us that he was full of grace and truth, and excellent in wisdom and understanding, during all the years of his obscurity, poverty, and toil.

Such, then, was the condition in life, freely chosen, of the Son of God; and if it was good for him, O poor toiling Christian, is it not good for you? Poor as you may be, you have more of this world's goods than he had. You have a place to lay your head; he had not during the years of his public ministry. You have a home, be it ever so humble; he had none. In poverty, as in every thing else, he had the pre-eminence. Let this thought reconcile us to our lot, whatever it may be. We cannot suffer as he suffered, for we are not able to bear it; nor will he suffer us to reach his depth of poverty and destitution.

Surely that cannot be a *bad* condition of life which Jesus chose as the best. It is not desirable to flesh and sense; but his history shows that it is very profitable. No one ever lived who could more appropriately use the petition which he taught us, "Give us this day our daily bread," than he. His was emphatically a life of faith and dependence;

and who among his true disciples would not be willing to follow in his footsteps?

His poverty was to him a source of keen suffering and trial; for it not only subjected him at times to the pangs of hunger and the humiliation of being a beneficiary of the bounty of others, but it would cause him to be treated with neglect and contempt; for human nature was the same then that it is now. Yet, notwithstanding all this, he chose that condition as the best.

And why the best? Because it was a condition which called into active exercise the graces of faith and trust; because it set him above the world, and prevented it from thrusting itself in between him and his Father; because it behooved him to become in all things like unto his brethren, and to show them by his own example what is good for them. He, as before remarked, sunk deeper in poverty than he will ever suffer us to sink, for he will not lay upon us more or heavier trials than we are able to bear; but his example shows us that, however undesirable poverty may be in itself, it is nevertheless often the best condition which God, in his wise providence, can assign us. To some he may give large possessions, with grace to

use them aright; but this is by no means a mark of special favour. To be rich in faith is far better than to be rich in silver and gold and houses and lands. Paul was a poor man; yet who can conceive the riches of his inheritance even in this mortal life? He received, as his Master promised he should, "more than a hundredfold in this present life" of all he sacrificed.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is a commandment very difficult to keep by a man who is full of this world's goods; for that which we depend upon and trust in is our god, be it what it may. In this important sense, therefore, a comparative destitution of these tangible objects of trust will bring us more to God, the Fountain of all good things; and, if we are able to keep the first commandment of the Decalogue, we shall not lack grace to render a good degree of obedience to all the rest; for if we have no other god before us we shall never lack the presence of the true God.

But we may not seek poverty for its own sake, any more than we may seek sickness, pain, or sorrow. When God sends these things in the way of trial and discipline, they are good; but if self-inflicted, or voluntary,

they are evil and only evil. Of this truth we have examples in the Romish and Hindoo superstitions. Our business is to be diligent in the pursuit of temporal blessings; and if our exertions result in wealth, it is well; but if not, it is still well. But, be our condition what it may, let us never forget that He in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily

"Had not earth whereon to lay his head."

Philip's Short Method.

Who among us is free from prejudice? Not one. Even Nathanael—of whom the Saviour himself testified that he was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile—was not exempt from it.

After Jesus had called Philip to be a disciple, "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." This was great and joyful news; but *Nazareth* was mentioned; and Nathanael happened to

have taken up a most contemptuous opinion of Nazareth; a mere prejudice, to be sure, but just such a prejudice as even good men are too apt to take up and cherish respecting men, and things, and sects, and places.

Philip, in the fulness of his heart, told his friend of his great discovery; but how must the warm current of his affections have rolled back upon his heart, contracted and chilled, at the cold inquiry, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Now, according to our ordinary notions, Philip might have gone into an argument to prove that some good thing *might* come out of Nazareth, and Nathanael might have continued to sneer at so foolish a notion; thus (as is the case in most controversies of the kind) strengthening the prejudices of one party and estranging the hearts of both. But Philip was a meek and a wise man, and adopted a very different course. "COME AND SEE," said he; and he made no other reply to Nathanael's captious objection. Nathanael did go and see; and before he had been one minute in the company of the despised Nazarene, in adoring wonder, he exclaimed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel!"

That was the way to cure prejudice then, and it is equally efficacious now. Have any of our Christian brethren taken up erroneous impressions of our views and practices as Christians? Let us ask them, as Philip did, to come and see,—ask them, as Philip did, in the sincerity and fervour of Christian affection, —and nine-tenths of the petty barriers that divide Christ's flock into little bands, who eye each other with coldness and jealousy, would give way; and those who are really one in Christ Jesus would find dear brethren in many whom they had hitherto regarded as rivals, or heretics, or aliens. And let us be ever ready, as Nathanael was, to GO AND SEE. It is certainly the simplest and safest way to obey the divine injunction, to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. Nathanael, by going to see, proved one all-important truth; and we, by following his example, may get rid of many foolish and hurtful prejudices, that now chill our own hearts and wound and injure those whom we ought to treat as beloved brethren.

This subject reminds me of an anecdote which a lady related to me many years ago. In one of the eastern counties of Pennsylvania there lived a faithful minister of the

Presbyterian Church, whose congregation, at the time we speak of, was blessed with a revival,—a real revival, as the sequel will show, and not an artificial excitement. During this time an aged Scotch minister of the same church, in passing through that section of country, threw himself upon the hospitality of this minister. Of course he was cordially welcomed. After tea, the aged guest was informed that there would be a meeting that evening for conversation and prayer at the church; that there was an interesting revival of religion in the congregation; and he was invited to attend. But the word *revival* operated upon his mind as the name of *Nazareth* had done upon the mind of Nathanael. "Nae," said he: "I'll hae naething to do wi' your revivals." "Come and see," said the other; "and if you observe any thing irregular or unscriptural I shall be glad if you will point it out." He did go. For some time the meeting was conducted in the ordinary manner, but with unusual solemnity. At length the minister informed his venerable friend that he wished to have some private conversation with some persons in the congregation, and at the same time desired him to pass through the house and converse with

such persons as he saw proper. He readily consented, and entered into the work with all his heart. After some time spent in this way, the two ministers met at the lower end of the room. Tears were coursing down the old man's cheeks. Grasping his friend by the hand, he exclaimed, "My dear brother, this is nae revival, this is nae revival, *but a glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit!*"

The anecdote pleased me at the time; and, as it comes in point, I have thrown it into a written form for the first time. Let us, then, lay aside our jealousies, meet every one in candour and fairness, and judge for ourselves. And, when we encounter prejudice on the part of our Christian brethren, let us avoid controversy,—which nine times in ten only makes the matter worse,—and, in a spirit of meekness and love, adopt *Philip's short method.*

Satan Tempting Christ.

The nature of spirits is to us involved in mystery; but this is not surprising, seeing that many of the physical phenomena with which we are surrounded are equally inscrutable. If we cannot perceive how or why a blade of grass grows, we need not be surprised that we cannot comprehend the nature of the spiritual world. Our senses reveal to us the fact of the existence of animal and vegetable life, their origin, progress, and decay. The revelation which God has been pleased to make to us in his word informs us of the existence of beings of whose substance our grosser senses cannot take cognizance, any more than the sense of feeling or of hearing could inform us of the presence or absence of light. Our innate consciousness, however, bears witness to the truth of divine revelation touching the immortal spirit which dwells in us, and by means of which we are

made capable of knowing and worshipping God, who is a spirit.

It is reasonable to infer from the extent of the physical creation that the number and variety of spiritual beings are beyond all conception. That some of them are holy, happy, and benevolent, and others unholy, unhappy, and malignant, are facts clearly revealed in Scripture. That many of the former are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation we are expressly told; and we are with equal clearness informed that the latter are equally assiduous in their endeavours to work the ruin of the human race. Why a God of infinite wisdom, power, and holiness should suffer such a commingling of good and evil in his creation, is what we cannot know now, although doubtless we shall know hereafter.

In some way, inscrutable to us, these spirits, both good and evil, are able to communicate with our spirits,—to influence them by suggestions and impressions. They do not exert a *controlling* influence; but their suggestions and impressions, doubtless, have a most important bearing upon our moral conduct and character. Bunyan, in his "Pilgrim's Progress," leads Christian near to the mouth of hell. In this place he says, "One

thing I would not let slip. I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded that he did not know his own voice; and thus I perceived it: when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian more to it than any thing he had met with before, even to think that he should now blaspheme Him that he loved so much before; yet if he could have helped it, he would not have done it: but he had not the discretion either to stop his ears, or to know from whence these blasphemies came." Bunyan himself, before he became firmly established in the divine life, was sorely exercised in this way; and there are probably few Christians of strong and active mind who have not had more or less experience of this kind. Christian finally rid himself of the fiend by the believing application of a suitable text of Scripture.

Paul, speaking of our great High-Priest, says he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Satan was allowed to suggest to his mind, as he does to ours, evil

thoughts and desires; but with him they were not for a moment entertained. Sin lies in entertaining and acting upon the evil suggestion, not in merely receiving it. Bunyan's Pilgrim was greatly distressed at the blasphemous thoughts which the wicked one injected into his mind, because he thought they originated there; but so long as such thoughts are distressing they are not sinful. So long as we can say, "I hate vain thoughts," we may safely cherish the comfortable assurance that grace still rules in our hearts, and will yet make us "conquerors and more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Jesus, after having lived in humble private life for thirty years, is just about to enter upon his public work,—to manifest himself to Israel as the Son of God with power. How shall he begin? Who is ready to acknowledge, in the humble carpenter of Nazareth, such high pretensions? What shall he do to make a favourable impression? These thoughts would naturally crowd into his mind; and, however little we may think of it, this was unquestionably a sore trial. His first step is to repair to John, and from his hand to receive the rite of baptism, and from

his Father that great acknowledgment,—"Thou art my beloved Son: in thee I am well pleased." From Jordan, the place of baptism, we are told, he "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." There he remained forty days in solitude, in sore conflict, without food, and probably with little rest. Finally he experienced the pangs of hunger; but there was nothing in that desert place to relieve him. Here Satan threw into his mind a very plausible suggestion:—"If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." That Satan appeared to the Saviour and spoke these words audibly, is an idea that I cannot for a moment entertain. It was, I think, a strong diabolical suggestion,—a distinct thought clothed in language. Satan would, of course, try to give the Saviour the impression that the thought was his own, as we have seen was the case with Bunyan's Pilgrim. Jesus, doubtless, knew whence it came, and he instantly dismissed that thought by bringing another to bear against it, expressed in these words:—"It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Luke iv. 4.) The power of working miracles was

talent possessed by Christ; but as he was made under the law, and subjected to the ordinary operations of God's providence, he was not at liberty to use that talent to free himself from the painful operation of the laws of his nature, or to relieve himself from the afflictive dispensations of that providence. It is remarkable that neither he nor any of the apostles ever wrought a miracle for the relief of their own personal wants. When he lacked food, he hungered as other men; when he travelled or laboured, he endured fatigue. Even when, by miraculous power, he walked upon the water, we may confidently believe that the physical toil attending it was as great as if he had walked the same distance upon ice or land. To have converted the stone into bread would, therefore, have been an act betraying impatience and distrust. And had he done so, then it could not have been said of him that he was made like unto his brethren; for they have ever been subject to like privations, with no other reliance save the word of God. As regarded his personal wants, Jesus exercised faith in God, just as his saints do; and in this case we see how well placed his confidence was; for we are told that, at the close of his temp-

tation, "angels came and ministered unto him." How sweet a feast would that be which these his glorious servants would bring him!

As a man, the Saviour had all the faculties and passions of a man,—ambition among the rest. Satan's next attempt was upon this passion; and to this end he was enabled to present to the mind of Jesus a vivid impression of the extent and grandeur of the kingdoms of this world. "If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." This is a very remarkable passage. To suppose that Satan would make to the Son of God so gross a proposition as to worship him in his own proper demoniac character is impossible; but the worship proposed was, in my humble view, a pursuit of objects of worldly ambition. Being conscious of the possession of almighty power, and of the ability to subdue the nations of the world and bring them under his sway as the King of kings, the temptation was truly a great one. But in this Satan was sternly repulsed. It is worthy of observation, however, that the proposal here made to the Master was, long afterwards, renewed, and was accepted in all its length and breadth by men who bore his name and professed to act

in his behalf. All these things long were, and are yet, to a great extent, in the possession of the Church of Rome; and how she became possessed of them we may learn from the passage before us. Satan is sometimes called the Prince of this world, and as such is worshipped under the disguise of ambition, glory, conquest, and perhaps latterly under the specious pretence of "the extension of the area of freedom." It was a bold and daring thing in Satan thus to attempt to bring the Prince of Peace himself into subjection, as he had done many other princes whom the world calls great. It is most likely, however, that, under the humble guise of humanity, Satan did not fully know Christ. The great mystery of God manifest in the flesh was perhaps too deep for him; nor is it probable that he was aware of the nature of the Saviour's mission. This, we think, is evident from the active agency he had in bringing him to death, the very thing that ruined the kingdom of darkness. Christ, however, had already a better title to the kingdoms of the world than any that Satan could bestow; for God himself had said to him, "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the

earth for thy possession;" and in due time he will cast out Satan, the usurper, and Antichrist, who holds under him.

The third and last temptation which the devil tried upon the Saviour appealed to a very different principle. Finding that he could make no impression upon his ambition, he appealed to his love of admiration, which is one form of vanity. He set him, in imagination, upon the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, and then tempted him to cast himself down in the sight of admiring thousands, trusting to the hands of angels to bear him up and thus waft him gently and triumphantly to the ground. There was much plausibility in this; for it would have been a most striking advent, and would have afforded a fine opportunity for announcing himself as the long-expected Messiah. As Jesus had met his former assaults by quotations from the Scriptures, the adversary in this case quoted Scripture too. In the 91st Psalm it is written, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee *in all thy ways.* They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Satan quoted this text, but garbled it by omitting the very important clause, "in all thy ways." But the

Saviour foiled him again by saying, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Here we are taught that out of the path of duty we have no warrant to claim or expect the protecting care of God or the guardianship of angels.

In contending with the great adversary of souls, the Saviour used no weapons which may not be as easily and as readily wielded by the humblest of his followers. "*It is written,*" is his uniform reply; and if we would arm ourselves against his wiles, we must take, as he did, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Here is a high and glorious example, to follow which is equally safe and easy. He who spake as man never spake could, with perfect ease, have foiled Satan with original language; but it pleased him to quote from what was already written; and, by doing so, he not only left us an example which we can follow in our hours of darkness and temptation,—and who has them not?—but he put honour upon the Scriptures.

The Affair of the Tribute-Money.

THERE never, probably, was exhibited more consummate craft than was involved in the question propounded to Christ by the Pharisees and Herodians, as to whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not. Judea at that time was a conquered province of the Roman Empire, and the Jews were obliged to acknowledge the authority of the Emperor and to pay tribute to him, however reluctant they were to do either one or the other. While among the Jews nothing could be more unpopular than to profess friendship and fidelity to Cæsar, on the other hand, filled as Judea was with the civil and military officers of Rome, nothing could be more dangerous than to deny the lawful authority of him whose conquering arms had made him the supreme ruler not only of Judea, but of almost the then known world.

Eager to entrap the Saviour and to get him into difficulty with the Roman authorities, or

to render him odious to the Jews,—they cared not which,—they resolved to put a question to him which he could not well refuse to answer, and which, as they supposed, answer it as he might, could not fail to involve him in difficulty. And in order the more certainly to insure a reply of some kind, a committee was appointed to wait upon him, who approached him with expressions of the most profound respect and abject flattery. "Master," said they, "we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men: tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" Here was a dilemma too great for human wisdom to escape,—a net so artfully woven that any but Jesus must have been caught in some of its meshes. In bland and honeyed accents the problem, with its flattering introduction, was pronounced; and, the leader having delivered himself, the artful deputation awaited with malicious exultation the confusion into which they were sure of throwing Him whom they hated. But how were they astonished to see a dark cloud of indignant scorn gather upon that calm, mild, benign countenance, and

hear him thunder forth the terrible reply, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" Now they would gladly escape, but he has caught them, and holds them fast in his grasp. "Show me the tribute-money," is his instant and stern command. They cannot refuse: so they produce a penny, (a small silver coin, bearing Cæsar's image and superscription.) "Whose is this image and superscription?" he demands of his now abashed interrogators. The question cannot be evaded, though they now feel that the little coin which they had put into his hand, and which he is holding up before their eyes, is at once the badge and symbol of their national degradation; and they feel with intense keenness how ridiculous it is in *them* to be asking such questions. They are now sufficiently punished: so he dismisses them by uttering one of the most profound and important precepts that ever fell upon mortal ears:—"*Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.*"

I desire to offer a few reflections upon this divine and comprehensive precept.

Nothing is more common than for rulers to invade the rights of God; for God has reserved to himself great and important rights.

While it is true that "the powers that be are ordained of God," and that we are bound by a divine command to yield obedience to the ordinances of men, yet all these, in order to challenge our obedience, must be subordinate to that Higher Law which God has laid down in his word. The apostles and early Christians were obedient to all the laws and ordinances of the Roman Empire, so far as they did not conflict with the rights and laws of God; but, where they did so, they deliberately disobeyed them. Had they yielded an undiscriminating obedience to the laws of the Empire, had they rendered to Cæsar all that he claimed, Christianity must have ceased to exist; for to confess Christ was for a long time a highly-penal offence. But these men gave unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's; but they suffered death in its most terrific form rather than yield to Cæsar the things that were God's.

When Darius the Mede issued a decree that no man should ask a petition of any god or man except himself, for a space of thirty days, he usurped one of the rights of God. Daniel at that time was high in office under Darius, and if any man was under obligation to render obedience to the decree he was the

man. But while he was ever faithful to his prince, and in all things rendered unto Cæsar the things that *were* Cæsar's, he firmly and openly refused to render unto Cæsar the things that were God's. Daniel might have prayed in secret, as doubtless he did; but his custom had been to pray with open window, with his face towards Jerusalem; and to have discontinued this custom during these thirty days would have been an acknowledgment that the laws of Darius were higher than the laws of God, and the rights of Darius more sacred than the rights of God. This Daniel would by no means do, but preferred rather to incur the penalty of being cast into a den of lions. "He that honoureth me I will honour," says God; and we see the truth of his promise wonderfully exemplified in the case of Daniel. "Fear not them which kill the body," says the Saviour,—an injunction which presupposes that it is sometimes necessary to resist the authority of the powers that be. Daniel found it necessary; so did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and so did the apostles and early Christians, and even Christ himself.

In the comprehensive scope of the precept before us, the word Cæsar is put for any civil

government: so it comes home to us as much as it did to the Jews, and is as much the rule for the government of free American citizens as of Jewish tributaries. Our circumstances are, however, materially different. Our Cæsar is in a measure under our own control; theirs was not; but the rule is of equally easy application to both. We, however, have one responsibility which did not rest upon the conquered Israelites, and that is the exercise of a perpetual vigilance to prevent any conflict between the laws of the country and the laws of God. This is the great duty of the citizen in his sovereign capacity, as an integral part of the very government itself; but if, unhappily, any laws shall be enacted contrary to his conscientious views in the sight of his Supreme Sovereign, and which he cannot obey without sin, his only course is to obey God rather than man, as the ancient worthies of whom we have been speaking did, and take the consequences. Daniel's disobedience and God's interposition for his deliverance put an end to the impious decree of Darius,—restored God to his rights and man to his liberty; and, if we wish well to our government and nation, we will do well always, and in all our duties as citizens,

to cling to the supremacy of God and his laws.

But who is to be the judge whether a certain law conflicts or agrees with the divine law? Here is one of the highest prerogatives of conscience. Daniel exercised it; the three young men on the plain of Dura exercised it; Peter exercised it before the Sanhedrim; and all the martyrs exercised it. Gamaliel exercised it in a sovereign capacity in the Jewish Council, when he opposed the measures about to be adopted against the Christians. (Acts v. 34–40.) The word of God is the only tribunal to which we can bring such questions, and we must hear that word for ourselves: another cannot hear it for us; and, having heard it, our own conscience, as in the sight of God, must decide.

"If any man sue thee at the law," says Jesus, "and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;" thus showing *his* estimate of the rights of property, as not worth contending about. So, of course, we are to violate no law because we honestly think it infringes the rights of property. This is one of our personal rights; and our mere personal rights, involving only material interests, are the lowest. The three orders of rights are

the rights of persons, the rights of government, and the rights of God. Conscience is the divinely-constituted arbiter amongst all these rights. It says, That is my coat, my right to it is unquestionable; but, under certain circumstances, it says, Let it go; do not contend about it. A personal right may sometimes be relinquished without sin. Cæsar says, Pay me so much tribute. Conscience sits upon the case and decides,—Cæsar has a right to it, in virtue of his supreme authority: let him have it. Next God speaks and claims ready and entire obedience to all his commandments, let who will forbid; and here conscience bends humbly before its only Lord, and, without gainsaying, urges obedience. We see, then, that the conscience of the humblest individual can of right have no sovereign but God himself, and that its rights are among the rights of God; for whoever undertakes to rule the conscience of another is guilty of usurping one of the reserved prerogatives of Jehovah.

All consciences may not be equally enlightened, and may err in the interpretation of God's laws, or may misapprehend his revealed will; but, be his honest impressions what they may, the man is bound to observe

its teachings. (See Romans xiv.) To those who do so out of regard to the glory of God, and with a sincere desire to obey him, he has promised more light; for he has said, "To the upright light shall arise in the darkness." We ought to be very tender, therefore, of the conscientious scruples of our brethren; for we may be sure that he who is really desirous of obeying God will not be suffered to go very far astray.

But let us beware of doing any thing merely because the law of the land enjoins it or allows it, or of regarding things as right because they may in this sense be lawful. Let us not forget that God has claims upon us as citizens, as sovereign people, quite as sacred as those which he has upon us as Christians. It is a fearful truth, that, as a nation, we are prone to forget God; and this is seen in the fact that when we come to exercise the highest act of sovereignty—the choice of our rulers—we forget the claims of God. Let us render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; but, while we do so, let the latter clause of the precept be ever in view: else we shall be in great danger of giving to Cæsar the things that are God's, and of regarding the authority of Cæsar as supreme.

Cling, then, to the Higher Law, and only render an entire obedience to the laws of man after they have been brought by an honest conscience to the bar of that law. Some will tell us that this is a dangerous rule, subversive of all government; but let such ponder the terrible examples with which history abounds of the ruin of nations who gave to Cæsar the things that were God's; and then let them point, if they can, to the example of any nation that sustained damage from a too scrupulous regard to the laws of God. His service is perfect freedom; and there can be no true freedom except in obedience to him. "Where the law of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Christ and the Woman of Samaria.

The patriarch Jacob, in his wanderings with his numerous family and extensive flocks, dwelt for a time at a place called Shechem, where he purchased a field of Hamar, and digged a well, which was for

ages celebrated for the abundance and excellence of its water. This well was known in the days of our Saviour, and is even yet known, as "Jacob's well." Its original object was to water the flocks of the proprietor; but long afterwards a city was built near it, the inhabitants of which drew their principal supply of water from it. This famous well was situated in that portion of the land of Palestine which, in New Testament times, was called Samaria, and that which in Genesis is called Shechem had been changed to Sychar. Shechem was the place where Jacob sent his son Joseph to seek his brethren and inquire after their welfare; but when he arrived at the place he found that they had removed to Dothan. He then followed them and found them there, and there they sold him to merchants who were going down to Egypt. Jacob, at his death, bequeathed a piece of ground to Joseph; and the Evangelist John tells us that this was the same property; and it remained in his family until the carrying away of the Ten Tribes.

On one of his journeys from Judea to Galilee, Jesus was pleased to pass through Samaria by way of Sychar. He travelled on

foot, in company with his disciples. It was about noon when they reached the well. Wearied with his journey, the Master sat down by the well, while the disciples went into the city to buy food enough to furnish them with a frugal repast, which they designed to take at the well; for such was the prejudice existing between the Jews and Samaritans that no act of hospitality was to be expected there. This prejudice did not prevent the Jews and Samaritans from making purchases of one another when the necessities of the case required it; but the Jews deemed it an abomination to ask even a cup of water of a Samaritan. The language of their conduct towards these neighbours was, "Stand back: I am holier than thou." It is true that the Samaritans had a corrupt religion,—a mingling of Hebrew and heathen rites,—for they were themselves a mingled people; but, from all we can gather of their character from the New Testament, they were a simple-minded people, more willing to receive the truth and embrace the Saviour than were the proud, bigoted Jews. The blame of this non-intercourse, I think, lay at the door of the latter.

While Jesus was sitting there, alone, weary,

hungry, thirsty, and but ill sheltered from the rays of the meridian sun, a woman came out of the city to draw water. She could not avoid seeing this Jewish stranger; and the consciousness that she was in the presence of one who despised her would cause her to hasten her operations that she might escape from his presence. That animosity which is inseparable from such a feeling would boil up intensely, and render her, as some might imagine, insensible to any good impression. But it was not so in the case before us; nor is it a general truth that such a state of mind as we have supposed this woman to have been in is unfavourable to the reception of good impressions. It is true in the moral world, as it is in the physical, that the moment when any thing is strained to its utmost tension is the very time to break it and destroy its power of further resistance. Jesus, who perfectly knew all hearts, touched the right spring when he said, "Give me to drink." The woman was both surprised and pleased that a Jew should ask a favour of her. Her heart warmed towards him, because she saw that he at least did not despise her nor disdain to ask a favour of her, and now she felt that there

was one Jew that she did not hate. Still, her womanly curiosity was excited, and she asked him how it was that he, being a Jew, should ask drink of her, who was a woman of Samaria. There was nothing in the question that indicated any thing like displeasure; but the thing was so unusual, so unexpected, that she wished to know how it was that he differed so far from the rest of his countrymen. The Saviour did not choose to go into a direct explanation, but intimated to her that He who had just asked a favour of her was able to confer upon her favours infinitely more valuable.

I have said that the Saviour touched the right spring in this woman's heart. He asked a favour,—a small one, to be sure, but still a favour. Had he first offered a favour, doubtless it would have been rejected with scorn; but in asking one he disarmed her prejudice and put an end to her hostility. How strange a thing is the human heart! and how important it is to understand its workings!

In answer to her inquiry, why he had asked her for drink, Jesus said, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him and he would have given

thee living water." The woman did not understand the imagery of the Saviour, but replied by asking another question, in which ignorance and shrewdness are curiously blended. "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?" In Palestine what was called "living water" was the water of springs, whether issuing from the surface of the earth or in the bottom of such a well as the one at Sychar, as contra-distinguished from the water of pools or cisterns. Understanding him literally, the woman seemed surprised that he should talk of having "living water" at his disposal. "Thou hast nothing to draw with," said she, "and the well is deep." These words, although misapplied when first uttered, are words of awful truth when applied to the presumptuous sinner who imagines that he can draw water out of the wells of salvation when he pleases. Let him remember that *he has nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.* True, the gracious proclamation is, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" and "Let him that is athirst come;" but let him not come in his own righteousness or strength; for the well is deep, and

he has nothing to draw with. None but Jesus can draw that water; and to whomsoever wills he will give it, and give it freely. He desired to give it to this woman; and when at last he succeeded in convincing her that he was the long-expected Messiah, we have every reason to believe that she did joyfully receive this unspeakable gift.

"Give me to drink," was the prayer of the suffering Saviour to the Samaritan woman; for, sure enough, the well was deep, and he had nothing to draw with. How inexpressibly affecting is it to behold the glorious Author of eternal life thus personifying, in a figure, the perishing sinner, to whom he only can give the water of life! "Give me to drink," said he; and what he said to that woman he desires us to say to him. And how must it grieve his Holy Spirit to see us forsaking him, the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to ourselves cisterns—broken cisterns—that can hold no water!

The woman seemed to be incapable of understanding the Saviour's metaphorical language, but persisted in a literal interpretation of it: so he abruptly changed the subject by requesting her to go and call her husband and come back to him. She replied

that she had no husband; and Jesus confirmed her words by telling her that, although she had had five husbands, she was then living in adultery; for, said he, "he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." Unabashed, the woman coolly remarked, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet," and then attempted to draw him into an argument as to whether that mountain or Jerusalem was the proper place to worship. Then it was that he gave utterance to some of the sublimest truths that ever saluted human ears. With God-like authority, he pronounced the old ceremonial law of the Jews abrogated, and announced the advent of the gospel, when it should no longer be required of men to go to that mountain nor yet to Jerusalem to worship the Father. God was about to manifest himself to his people in a clearer and simpler aspect than ever he had done since Adam was expelled from Eden. "God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

What an address was this to such an audience! One Samaritan woman only heard it fall from the lips of its author; but the pen of inspiration caught up his words, and they have gone to the ends of the world, and

millions of hearts have been thrilled, enlightened, and warmed by them. When men are about to utter some great truth, they seek out some great occasion, and a large and intelligent audience capable of appreciating what they say. But how differently did Jesus act! But in this he exhibited himself as God and not man. To him nothing was great, nothing small. As the God of Providence, his words were safe; for he had power to preserve them forever, and to send them to all the world.

The woman believed, and eagerly and gladly she called upon her neighbours to come out and see the Messiah. And many of them believed also, and he abode amongst them two days, and then resumed his journey to Galilee, on his mission of love and mercy.

"Dispensing good where'er he came,
The labour of his life was love."

The Blind Man Receiving Sight.

It is a sad thing to be blind. One who had enjoyed the blessing of sight until his mind had become richly stored with learning, and his fine genius had been fully developed, thus, in eloquent pathos, laments its loss:—

"Thus with the year
Seasons return; but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark,
Surround me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with a universal blank
Of Nature's works, to me expunged and razed,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."—Milton.

If to be deprived of sight, after having drawn in wisdom and knowledge through this greatest "entrance" to the soul,—after the mind has been filled with the vivid images of beauty and truth which only the eye can reveal,—images which can afterwards be

brought forth in endless combinations by the power of memory,—be so afflictive, what must it be to be born blind, and thus be totally incapable of even the idea of light, of colour, and of the infinite field of beauty and grandeur which this most perfect and spiritual of our senses reveals to us! To know that others are blessed with a sublime and delightful power, of the nature of which we cannot form even the vaguest conception, must be an affliction of the sorest kind. We do not—indeed, we cannot—sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of our Creator in giving to us this wonderful power, and not to us only, but to nearly all his sentient creatures.

In the ninth chapter of the Gospel by John we have a most interesting narrative of a man who was born blind receiving the gift of sight from the Saviour. He was not only blind, but poor; for we are incidentally told that he sat by the wayside begging. Jesus, as he passed by, saw him. We are not told that the blind man said any thing to him, or solicited alms of him, much less asked him to give him sight. Very likely the poor man had never heard of Jesus: nay, we are almost sure of it, for, when subsequently ques-

tioned by his neighbours about the manner of his obtaining sight, he said, "*A man that is called Jesus* made clay," &c., plainly intimating that all he knew of his benefactor was that he was called Jesus.

The disciples, who were in company, inquired of the Saviour who had sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind. This was a common Jewish superstition, which attributed every unusual casualty or affliction to some heinous sin committed either by the subject of it or by his immediate progenitors. Jesus corrected their mistake by replying, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." We must not, of course, understand him as asserting that this man and his parents were sinless, but that neither he nor they had sinned in the manner supposed. Possibly a trace of the wide-spread heathen superstition of the transmigration of souls had found a lodgment in the minds of the disciples; and the notion that this blindness was on account of this man's own sins could only refer to sins committed in a former body.

This conversation being over, the compassionate Saviour approached the blind man,

carrying in his hand a little of the dust of the road, moistened with his own spittle, and with this he anointed the eyes of the blind man. Was there any thing in the dust and the spittle that could give sight to those rayless orbs? Certainly not. Could not Jesus have restored him to sight, as he did Bartimeus, with a word? Doubtless he could. Then why make clay, which of itself was worthless? Did he do so merely to manifest his sovereignty or to vary the mode of his operations? We must not think so. Unquestionably the clay was necessary, or it would not have been used. But Jesus is not enigmatical either in his words or his works; and a little reflection will teach us why he put clay on this man's eyes and not on those of Bartimeus.

Bartimeus knew Jesus, and fully believed in his power to heal him; but this poor man, whose mind was as dark as his eyes, knew him not, and of course did not and could not believe in him. The faith of the former existed and was in full action, and he had done his part when he cried for mercy and afterwards cast aside his garment and ran to his great Deliverer; but in the wretched object before us faith was not yet even

implanted. It required something tangible—something that he could *feel*—to excite hope or action; and the clay was well calculated to do this.

It was a strange action on the part of a stranger; and when accompanied by the command, uttered in a tone of kindness, "Go, wash," strong expectation, however vague and indefinite, would thrill his soul and lead him to instant obedience. This hope, this vague expectation of some benefit, was the beginning of faith, and his going and washing were its first-fruits, his first acts of obedience. Moreover, there was a fitness between the situation in which the Saviour had placed him and the command he gave him; for the clay, had he not obeyed, would have been as uncomfortable as it would have been unseemly.

"*Go, wash in the pool of Siloam,*" said the great Physician. This pool was not far distant, so the command was reasonable; but no other water would have answered, because to wash anywhere else would have involved an act of disobedience. The blind man appears to have made no objection to the pool, but went immediately, washed, "and came seeing." In this he behaved very differently

from the proud Assyrian leper, who would greatly have preferred to wash in Abana or Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, rather than in the despised Jordan. We cannot imagine the wonder and delight that would fill the soul of this poor man when, upon raising his head from the water, the glories of creation burst upon him in all their amplitude and splendour.

In the mean time Jesus went away, and the man saw nothing more of him for some time; but we may be sure that he did not for a moment lose sight of his glad and grateful servant. As was natural enough, the affair made a great excitement among the man's neighbours. The case was truly a wonderful one. Not content with wondering at and talking of the strange event themselves, they brought him to the Pharisees. At first these last would be astounded at this new evidence of the Divine mission of Him whom they hated and were determined at all hazards to oppose; but presently they discovered that "*it was on the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.*" This terrible desecration of the Sabbath was enough for them. They were blind to the great and obvious fact that God himself had miraculously blessed

the simple means which Jesus had made use of, and thus signally manifested his approbation. It is truly wonderful how slight a reason will suffice those who are at heart opposed to the truth, and how blind they are to evidences the most palpable and convincing. We meet with much of this spirit in the infidel world of the present day.

In foretelling to his disciples the persecutions they should meet with,—that they should be brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake,—the Saviour uttered this remarkable language:—"Settle it, therefore, in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." In the examination of this poor simple man before these haughty rulers we see a fulfilment of this great promise. In an artless but irresistible argument he confounds them, and then boldly asks them to become the disciples of Jesus. All the reply they had was in these words of scorn and pride:—"Thou wast altogether born in sins; and dost thou teach us?" plainly showing that they too laboured under the same superstitious notion that the Saviour had corrected in his dis-

ciples; and, having uttered this cruel taunt, they cast him out of the synagogue. This was a heavy penalty, attended not only with the loss of religious privileges, but with many civil and social disabilities. Notwithstanding, therefore, the blessing of vision that had just been conferred upon him, he wandered forth, like his glorious Benefactor, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, despised and rejected, an outcast, accursed and shunned. In this forlorn condition Jesus sought him, "and when he had found him he said, *Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*" Ah! here is more light,—better than that which the clay and the spittle let in. That showed him this world, and a sad revelation it had been to him; but now, having been chastened and tried, he is about to be translated into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God. The inquiry came home with power to his heart, and he eagerly asked, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe in him? And Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that talketh with thee." When the glories of the visible creation burst upon his astonished soul at the Pool of Siloam, his wonder and joy would be great indeed; but the joy that now thrilled his

heart at the presence of his God and Saviour would as far transcend that as the heavens are higher than the earth. With passionate devotion he exclaimed, "Lord, I believe," and then worshipped him as no creature may be worshipped. Before this he had honoured his Benefactor as a prophet; now he adores him as his God.

This is one of those passages of Scripture which is in itself a fountain of living water, —a perennial spring at which we may drink and come again and again. The narrative, interesting in itself, is literally bestudded with gems of inestimable truth. In it we see the goodness and mercy of Jesus; we see the wretchedness of fallen man lying in hopeless darkness and ignorance; we see the rise, progress, triumph, and reward of faith. And then, if we turn to the dark side of the picture, we see the invincible hostility of unbelief to all that is true and lovely and of good report. But, better than all, in it we read, substantially, a history of our own espousals, if indeed we do believe on the Son of God. And happy are we if, like the man upon whom Jesus bestowed sight, we can say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

Spiritually we are all born blind; but He who anointed the eyes of this poor man and opened them to natural light, and gave him also the light of life, is ready to give us light. Let us, then, as we have heard of him, run to him as Bartimeus did, and cry earnestly, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" and not sit in our darkness, as this poor man did, with no expectation of any thing beyond the beggarly elements of this world.

Confessing Christ.

In the narrative of the poor woman who touched the Saviour's garment in the crowd, and was by that means cured of an inveterate and distressing malady, we find many topics for profitable reflection. We see in it a display of the power, goodness, and omniscience of Christ. In the woman we see true faith, mingled with much weakness and sinful fear.

The Saviour was walking in the highway, going to the house of Jairus to heal his daughter, and was dispensing divine instruction to

the multitude who crowded around him. Among them was a pale, melancholy female, agitated with a new hope of recovery from an incurable malady. Too timid to make an open application to the Great Physician, she resolved to take, as it were, by stealth, that healing virtue which she so much needed. Eagerly, with spasmodic energy, she pressed forward, until with her hand she could reach his garment. She touched it. Instantly her feelings made known the great fact that she was restored to health. A trembling hope gave place to exulting joy.

But suddenly Jesus stops, and demands, "*Who touched my clothes?*" His disciples think it a strange question, for they immediately reply, "Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, *Who touched me?*" But the accidental touch of the multitude was nothing. Neither he nor they were affected by it. There was no inherent virtue in his clothes, any more than in other clothes. But the woman's touch was an act of faith, and as such it met its appropriate reward. Whether any superstition mingled with her faith is not for us to inquire. Perhaps there did; yet He who "knoweth our frame, who remembereth that we are dust," pardoned

and accepted the poor suppliant, for such she was.

Why did Jesus ask, "Who touched me?" Could he be ignorant of that? Surely not. He saw the first rising of this thought in the woman's heart. He had observed all her movements as no one else could observe them. He asked the question because this woman, who had secured a great blessing, *had not confessed him before men, and, for aught we know, did not intend to do so.* If ever there was a case when this might have been permitted, we might suppose this was that case. But no: this could not be permitted. The Saviour was inflexible. His eye ranged over the multitude until it rested upon the timid, trembling object of his search, when she rushed forward, regardless of the sympathies or the sneers of those around her, fell down before him, and openly confessed all, acknowledged her obligation, and received from the lips of her great Benefactor a blessing which would cause a purer thrill of joy than the mere healing of her malady had given. "*Daughter,*" said he,—she has confessed him before men; he already confesses her before his Father and the holy angels, and calls her by that endearing term,—"*Daughter, thy faith hath made*

thee whole: go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." What majesty and kindness are here commingled! The loving kindness of a familiar, sympathizing friend is blended with the authority and power of Almighty God! When that poor woman discovered that she was healed, she was glad, for she was greatly benefited; but she could not have gone away in peace. Now, however, she "rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Her joy is no longer a selfish joy. By touching the Saviour's garment she received the healing virtue which she so much needed; but by confessing him before men she received that peace "which passeth all understanding."

Often in after-life would that woman think and speak of this most interesting incident; and, could we hear her testimony, doubtless we should find that her strongest emotions of gratitude were excited because her Saviour would not permit her to depart without confessing him.

This subject teaches how unwise it is to expect salvation by a secret faith, a hidden devotion. Most of our prayers and communion with God are, and ought to be, in secret; but if our light be worth any thing it cannot be hid. The true believer will bear his hum-

ble testimony before the world; and he can never find peace until he does so. He may have joy, the joy of pardoned sin; but not peace. If his faith be genuine, he will be constrained to own his obligations to his Saviour in the face of a scoffing, unbelieving world.

To unite ourselves with the church of Christ is the common form of confessing him before the world. Time was when to do so was a great cross. Its conditions were shame and contempt, often danger and death; but it is not so now. To join the church now is a reputable act, almost a fashionable one. No reproach, no loss, no danger, attaches to the act now. But in this very fact there is cause for deep searchings of heart. If we can confess Christ and yet avoid the reproach of Christ, we may apprehend that something is wrong. "Is the offence of the cross ceased?" Are the terms of discipleship easier now than they were in the days of Christ and the apostles? Oh, I fear that while many of us have *professed* to be Christians, few have *confessed* Christ. If we have not his spirit, we are none of his; and if we have, the world will hate us as it hated him. Our religion may be too lifeless, too tame, to

excite the derision, reproach, or opposition that the early Christians met with. Why, if such people should appear in our day they would be stigmatized as enthusiasts and fanatics.

What then? shall we court persecution? By no means; but rather bless God that we are exempted from it, provided that exemption does not arise from our conformity to the world; for remember, it is written, "*The world will love its own.*" But is there not reason to fear that the present apparent reconciliation between the church and the world arises more from the conformity of the church to the world than from that of the world to Christ?

The Last Interview.

THE hearts of the disciples were filled with sorrow and dismay at the near approach of the loss of their beloved Master. He had more than once spoken to them in language intended to prepare their minds for the sad events that awaited them. But that any

evil should befall HIM, or them while with him, was a thought which, in their love for him, and their fondly-cherished although unfounded hopes of his earthly reign, they resisted until the closing scenes of his life forced upon them the sad reality.

In the language of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus we catch a glimpse of the early and long-cherished impression of the disciples:—"We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Piety, patriotism, and personal ambition united in keeping dominant in their minds the idea that their Master, whom they firmly believed to be the long-promised Messiah, would re-establish the throne of his father David, and reign forever over the kingdom of Israel, after having redeemed it from foreign bondage. But now they began to discover that in all these bright anticipations they had been mistaken.

The thoughts of his own dreadful death seem to have been ever present to the mind of the Saviour. He foresaw all its anguish and its horrors, in reference to which he had said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and oh, how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" But still he sympathized deeply

in the sorrows of his disciples, and looked forward with desire for a suitable occasion of ministering to their comfort. Such an occasion was furnished in the observance of the last paschal supper. Then, in that upper room in Jerusalem, at the close of the sad and solemn feast, he rose and took bread, and brake it, and said, "*Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you.*" In us, who are familiar with all the facts and know the true import of these words, they excite no dismay. We behold the gloom and the glory at one view. But to them those words expressed chiefly violence and death. "Broken for you!" Awful and mysterious words! After having long been dreaming of seats in an earthly kingdom, near the throne of their beloved Sovereign, to hear him speak of his body being broken and his blood shed *for them*,—how would it overwhelm them with astonishment and sorrow! With these feelings they ate the bread and drank the wine; and then he, seeing their affliction, poured forth those words of consolation recorded in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John, beginning, "Let not your hearts be troubled." But for that last blessed conversation the disciples must have sunk into utter despondency.

They loved their Master fervently; they believed in him as the promised Christ; but as yet they did not understand the nature of his mission, or of the kingdom which he had come to establish.

What a scene was there! There stood the great Sufferer, crushed beneath the weight of the sins of a world,—a load which nothing short of infinite strength could sustain. The "horrible tempest" of Divine wrath is coming nearer and nearer. His innocent humanity shrinks in terror, and he exclaims, "Father, save me from this hour!" But instantly he remembers his high mission, and adds, "but for this cause came I unto this hour." In that awful storm which was beginning to beat upon him were mingled the wrath of God, the cruelty of men, and the malice of devils. There sat the weak, trembling, perplexed, dispirited disciples. In his pity for them he seems for a time to forget his own sorrows, and to cheer them he utters words full of encouragement and hope, and even of joy. His eye saw the gloom as they could not see it; but beyond the gloom he saw the glory that would follow. He saw the joy that was set before him, and was content to endure

the cross. He saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied.

There he stood in their midst, in appearance not now so much that of a master as a brother, a companion, and a friend. His language has in it not one desponding word. All is joy and triumph. Love dictates every sentence, every precept, every promise. His opening is tender and affectionate beyond example; his close, the sublimity of triumph: —"Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

In thinking of Jesus, we ought never to forget that he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," and that he was altogether as great and glorious in that upper chamber as he is "in the midst of the throne." In the scene so well portrayed by the pen of the Evangelist, we see him as he was, kind, affectionate, companionable, admitting his friends to the most intimate intercourse, and expressing by word and deed the greatest fondness for their company. "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." And in that wonderful prayer which followed, these are his words:—"Fa-

ther, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." We may therefore safely, confidently, conclude that Jesus has, and ever will have, an intense desire for the company and fellowship of his redeemed ones; and that in heaven we shall not worship him at an awful distance, but shall be admitted to still closer intimacy than were his disciples in the days of his flesh; for we shall be more like him than they were.

Jesus speaks of the period during which his disciples should not see him as "a little while;" and the same is true of all his people. A very minute portion of their existence is spent in a state of absence from him. A few saw him on earth,—saw him for a little while,—and then for a little while they lost sight of him; but soon they were with him again, and will remain with him forever. "I will see you again," said he; for it was expedient for them that he should leave them for a little while.

"I will see you," he says to every one of us who believe in him, to every one whom he has redeemed. In earnest prayer, he says, "I will that they be with me where I am." Of them it is written, "They shall see

his face;" and John says, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

How good it would be for us could we rise to and maintain a realizing sense of these glorious prospects! Then could we obey the closing injunction of the blessed Saviour, when he says, "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." Such a faith would bear us above the cares, anxieties, and temptations of the world; but, better still, it would render us proof against the dangers arising from its riches and honours and pleasures.

The Denial of Peter.

THERE is nothing better for the heart than the contemplation of the Saviour's character, as it is drawn out and exhibited before us in his unparalleled trials. In so learning Christ, we will do well to take a single incident at a time, rather than a succession of incidents.

During that dreadful night in which he was betrayed, as narrated by the Evangelists, there are incidents enough set forth to show

to us his whole character,—enough to occupy our thoughts forever. The tender and affecting scene in the upper chamber; the consolatory and instructive farewell address; the prayer; the agony in the garden; the sleeping disciples; the arrival of the band of soldiers; the perfidious kiss; the arrest; the flight of the disciples; the mock trial; the crown of thorns; the buffetings and insults of the cruel men by whom he was surrounded; and the denial of Peter. What a cluster of subjects for solemn contemplation!

In meditating upon these things, the Christian will find his heart inclined to dwell upon one or another of the affecting incidents, according to the circumstances in which the providence of God has at the moment placed him.

We propose now to dwell for a few moments upon one incident of that ever-memorable night, which is equally affecting and instructive. We mean the denial of Peter.

Peter loved his Master sincerely, passionately, vehemently; and this love was met by the deep and unchangeable love of Jesus in a measure beyond what we are able to conceive. What, then, must have been the agony of the

Saviour's soul—for he had the natural affections of a man, a friend, a brother—when Peter, in that trying hour, denied him with cursing and bitterness! "I know not the man!" exclaimed his unstable friend and disciple, and then added to perfidy and falsehood the further sin of gross profanity. Jesus heard these words; and of all the wounds inflicted upon his spirit that night this was the deepest and the keenest. The traitorous kiss of Judas, and the gross insults of the rabble and the soldiers, were nothing compared to those words of vehement, scornful, thrice-repeated denial from a bosom-friend.

But the blessed Saviour bore it all meekly. He did not withdraw his love and tender compassion from his faithless disciple. He knew the strength of his temptation; and his all-prevalent prayer preserved him from utter apostasy. He turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered his words: his heart melted, his faith resumed its power in his heart, and his love revived and glowed more fervently than ever.

That look was a look of love, of compassion and forgiveness. It spoke what tongue could not speak. It was not a frown, but a look

of unutterable sorrow, tenderness, and expostulation.

We, too, are sometimes wounded in the house of our friends. Words of bitterness, uttered by those we love, sometimes enter our hearts and burn like coals of juniper, causing us to endure the insufferable torture of a wounded spirit. At such times let us call to remembrance the meekness and unwavering love of Jesus when he was denied by him whose professions of attachment had been the most ardent of any; and, in our feelings and conduct towards the offending party, let us try to imitate his example. Jesus, by a look of tenderness and compassion, broke Peter's heart, and caused copious tears of penitence to flow, leaving him a wiser, humbler, and better man. So may we, by doing likewise, restore to ourselves the alienated affections of our friends, whose words or actions, like daggers, have pierced our souls.

Had the Saviour resented the gross affront that was put upon him by Peter, even by a frown or a reproachful word, he might have rendered him an enemy forever. So we, if we would save our offending friend, no matter how sorely he may have wounded us, must

be the first to seek reconciliation. This is the way God does with sinners; this is the way Jesus did with Peter; and in this, as well as in other things, we must follow his example.

It is a law in moral philosophy, seen as well in the dealings of God with men and men with God, as in the dealings of man with man, *that the offending party hates and shuns the offended;* and if there ever be any true, lasting reconciliation, the first overture must come from the injured party. By nature we hate God. Why? Because we have injured him. God loves us, and seeks to be reconciled to us. Why? Ah! Christian, we must seek for the reason in his infinite goodness and mercy; but the fact that he loves us and seeks to be reconciled to us shows us that this wonderful moral law of which we have been speaking governs all moral beings, from the Infinite Creator himself down to the feeblest of his rational creatures.

This great truth, while it reveals to us God reconciling a world of rebels and enemies to himself, reveals to us our duty in some of the severest trials of the heart.

Friend, has he in whom you confided been unfaithful or unkind, so that he has ceased to

love you and you to love him? Has he acted in such a manner that you feel justified in casting him off? Do it not. Remember that his offence is not so great as was Peter's, and Jesus did not cast him off.

Wife, has your husband offended you in word or injured you in deed? Turn upon him a look of tenderness and love, as your Saviour did upon his erring disciple. Beseech him to be reconciled to you, as God has besought you to be reconciled to Him. Do not indulge the vain hope, if through his injurious conduct your hearts have become alienated, that he will seek reconciliation. It is not to be hoped for. It is contrary to the great law of man's moral nature.

Husband, has your wife stung your heart with unkindness, with groundless accusations, with a withdrawal of her confidence, with words of wrath and bitterness, or in any way in which poor human nature may sin? Oh, place a guard upon your heart, lest the same enemy which has led her captive seize also upon you! Let your unchanging love call back your poor erring companion, as the love of Jesus rescued Peter. Had he waited until Peter should have repented and re-

turned to his first love, he would have waited forever.

These reflections might be extended indefinitely; but let this suffice. Our object is accomplished if we have succeeded in setting forth this great law of our moral being, and this all-important rule of action.

"Abide with us."

After the death of Jesus, the disciples were for a time sunk in the deepest despondency. That He who had called the dead to life, subdued at a word the most obstinate diseases, and so commanded the winds and the waves that they obeyed him,—that he should die, and die such a death, was to them appallingly mysterious. They had heard the bitter taunt, "He saved others, himself he cannot save;" and now it really seemed as if such was the fact. All was dark, mysterious, and dreadful; and who can conceive the desolation of heart which they suffered?

In this condition, two of them had occasion to go to Emmaus, a village some eight miles

distant from Jerusalem. As they walked along they conversed earnestly about the awful events which had just transpired; and the more they talked the more they were perplexed. At length they were joined by a stranger, who kindly inquired, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" Cleopas seemed to be surprised at the question, and supposed that their new acquaintance must certainly be a stranger in Jerusalem, or he would have known all about the death of their great Master. In the simplicity of their natures, they supposed that what filled their hearts must of course have occupied the thoughts of all others.

In the fulness of his heart, Cleopas gave to the stranger a comprehensive account of the character and death of Jesus of Nazareth, "a prophet mighty in word and in deed," and alluded, in impressive terms, to their crushed hope of the redemption of Israel.

So far the stranger heard him with attention and sympathy; and then, to their astonishment and delight, he told them more of Jesus than they had ever known. His words of wisdom and knowledge and love caused their hearts to burn within them,

while he opened to them the Scriptures. Their perplexity was gone; their sorrow was turned into joy; all seemed bright again.

Still the wondrous, the eloquent, the good stranger remained unknown. That it was Jesus himself seems never to have entered their minds; but already they began to love him with something like the fervour with which they had loved their Lord and Master. They could not bear to part with him: so when they reached the end of their journey they uttered the earnest entreaty, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." He readily consented; and at their evening repast "he took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave it to them." Then were their eyes opened, and they knew him; and, although he instantly vanished out of their sight, he left behind him such joy in the hearts of these good men, that, without a moment's delay, they hastened back to Jerusalem to carry the joyful news to the other disciples that "the Lord is risen indeed."

In this transaction we see a beautiful example of not only the love of Christ, but the love of the brethren. With childlike confidence the disciples made known to the benevolent stranger the cause of their own

sorrow; and, when he entered into their feelings and cleared up their doubts and perplexities, they loved him as only Christ's disciples can love. Whoever the stranger might be, they soon discovered that he was like Christ, and was his friend; and hence they gave the kind invitation, "Abide with us." It was really a prayer, though they knew it not. Jesus accepted it as done to himself, for indeed it was done for his sake.

Jesus has since ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God; but he has left ample provision for the comfort and joy of all who truly believe. Still may we with perfect confidence say to him, as did the disciples of old, "Abide with us;" for he has said, "Lo, I am with you always." And again, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And again, "He shall give you another Comforter, that shall abide with you forever."

"Abide with us." We cannot say this to Jesus in sincerity and in truth unless we love him; and, if we do really love him, there is no petition which we may offer with greater confidence. Hear what he has said:—"If a

man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and will come unto him, and we will *make our abode with him.*" Can any thing be more explicit? The very thing that the two disciples asked is here emphatically promised. But hear him again:— "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." With what entire propriety and perfect confidence, therefore, may we adopt the language of the disciples and say, "Abide with us."

Paul and the Jailer.

"God is love," says the apostle; and if at times he manifests himself in the aspect of wrath and terror, still, these subordinate attributes are but ministering servants to that glorious one which constitutes the essential element of his nature. "God is love;" but fallen, sinful man can only know and enjoy that love by being brought back from his wanderings by Christ the Good Shepherd.

Terror and severity may be necessary to show him his danger and induce him to flee for refuge to some real or imagined covert from the tempest; yet nothing but the still small voice of love can bring him to God; nothing else can break and melt his heart; nothing else can give him peace.

Stricken with sinful fear, Elijah left the field of duty and conflict, and wandered onward and onward until he found himself in Horeb. His heart was dark, desponding, and rebellious. Taking refuge in a cavern of that mountain, he gloomily awaited his fate, revolving, as we may gather from his words, harder thoughts of God than of himself. Here the Lord visited him. First he gave him a glimpse of his power and of his wrath in the triple terrors of tempest, earthquake, and fire; but the narrative leaves us to infer that the lion-hearted prophet gazed upon these terrific phenomena with an unaffected heart. But after all had passed, and nature was hushed in repose unutterably deep when contrasted with the late turmoil, a still small voice struck upon his ear. That face which blanched not at the exhibitions of God's power and wrath is instantly covered with his mantle, and the great man bends, an humble

penitent, before his God; for that still small voice of love and mercy was His voice.

Many vainly imagine that if they had witnessed the wonders wrought by the prophets and apostles, but more especially by the Son of God, they would have believed,—they would have been among the number of his faithful followers. But it is a delusion as vain as that which filled the mind of the rich man in hell, when he exclaimed concerning his impenitent brethren, who were in danger of following him to the world of woe, "Nay, father Abraham, but if one rise from the dead they will repent." Wonders, prodigies, terrors, apprehension of judgment, can never of themselves lead to repentance. Nothing but the apprehension of the mercy of God through Christ can melt the heart of the sinner. All else but hardens if left to operate alone.

The case of the jailer of Philippi is another most instructive example of the great truth that nothing but the goodness of God—the voice of love and mercy—is capable of bringing us to repentance.

Paul and Silas, in their missionary travels, came to Philippi, where they preached the gospel as in other places. A miracle was

performed by Paul upon a damsel, in delivering her from the power of a foul spirit, here called a spirit of divination, into the nature of which possession it is not our purpose at this time to inquire. Suffice it to say that by doing so he destroyed forever the source of gain which some people had found in this unhappy young woman's calamity. Nothing so exasperates wicked men as interference with their profits, as is abundantly manifested in our day by the rage which is excited against those who endeavour to put an end to dealings in another kind of spirits, equally foul and far more destructive; for that spirit, if let alone, would have destroyed one soul; this destroys thousands.

Paul and Silas were seized, and, before a tribunal more of the character of a mob than of a court of justice, were condemned and sentenced to be severely beaten. This done, they were thrust into prison, and the jailer charged to keep them safely. He, in obedience to the injunction of his masters, placed them in the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. It were difficult to imagine a situation more forlorn and deplorable. To the eye of sense there could be no more wretched individuals in all that city than

Paul and Silas; but in that case, the eye of sense would have brought back a very erroneous report. They held communion with God in prayer, and at midnight were so filled with his fulness that they burst out in songs of praise. Jesus had said to Paul, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee;" and here we see how faithful he is to his promise.

This was a strange sound in such a place and at such an hour. The usual language there was that of complaint, lamentation, curses, and blasphemy,—the utterance of remorse, despair, or rage. But here is the voice of joy and gratitude and thanksgiving. "And the prisoners heard them." God saw the hearts that were melted and the tears that flowed that night in that prison at that song of praise. To some of them, doubtless, it was the "still small voice" of love and mercy, guided and made effectual by the Holy Spirit. The pen of inspiration is silent as to the effect of the wonders of that night upon the hearts of the prisoners; but we may build our hopes upon the significant clause, "The prisoners heard them."

"And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors

were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." That this earthquake was purely miraculous we may safely infer from its effects in opening the doors and liberating the prisoners from their fetters. And though the doors were opened and every one's bands loosed, by some strange attraction they all remained: not one attempted to escape. That strangely-sweet anthem of praise still sounded in their ears and thrilled their hearts, and, it may be, caused them to cluster around the wonderful men who had come to be their companions.

At this most interesting point the keeper of the prison is again introduced. We are told that, "awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison-doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled." That this was a wicked man we may confidently infer from the barbarous manner in which he carried out the orders of his superiors respecting Paul and Silas; for to put the feet of men abused as they were into the stocks was an act of abominable cruelty. But the tortures of his prisoners did not disturb his slumbers; for we are told that he slept until he found himself surrounded by

the terrors of the earthquake. But that produced no saving effect, no penitence; for we find that his chief concern was about his prisoners; for, seeing the doors all thrown open, he supposed that they had fled, of course. Driven to desperation at this thought, he was about to destroy himself. Among the Romans, suicide, in some cases, was regarded as commendable; and this man was about to act upon that heathenish sentiment, probably to escape the ignominious death that awaited him had the case been as he imagined. It is impossible to suppose that the jailer did not recognise in this tremendous event a supernatural power; but still he was not awed by it. It did not arouse his conscience: he thought only of his earthly masters and his own earthly honour. Never was that man's heart harder, never was he in higher rebellion against his Maker, than at that awful moment. The earthquake had expended its terrors upon him without any saving effect; for "*the Lord was not in the earthquake.*"

But emotions which he never felt before poured like a flood through his heart at the voice of Paul, who, in a tone of kindness and love, cried out, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here." His prisoners are safe,—his

own life is safe; but his heart is broken. He trembles now, and, humbled, stricken, and convicted, he falls down before his two Christian prisoners. What crushed this bold, bad man, who a moment before was about to rush unbidden into the presence of his Maker? It was LOVE. Paul yearned for his salvation, and the Spirit of God carried the words of His servant with power to his heart. At the still small voice of God Elijah hid his face in his mantle, after witnessing unmoved the wonders of his power: so the jailer, only hardened by the exhibition of divine power, was utterly subdued by the simple language of love and mercy, and cried, in accents of penitence and trembling hope, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The goodness of God—not his severity—led this man to repentance.

Some have very unwisely interpreted the anxious inquiry of the jailer as referring to his alarm about his prisoners. But Paul had already assured him that they were all safe, and that he had therefore nothing to apprehend on that account. His words removed the fear of man, but they implanted the fear of God; and now he is only anxious to be delivered from sin and its consequences. Paul so understood him, and directed him to

the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation.

I have confined myself to a single point in this instructive narrative, and that is the illustration which it affords of the great truth —too much forgotten—that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance, and that it is only the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ that can ever awaken in the breast of a sinner true sorrow for sin. As we said before, terrors, judgments, and chastisements are useful, and are used as auxiliaries; and the apostle has said that "the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ;" but all sacred history and all experience testify that these, of themselves, only harden the sinner and render him more desperately wicked. It was so with Pharaoh; it was so with the jailer. A look of kindness and love broke Peter's heart; and a few kind words from a deeply-injured prisoner caused the cruel jailer of Philippi to cry for mercy, and were instrumental in bringing him to Christ.

The Case of Onesimus.

In nothing does the character of the great apostle appear more lovely and attractive than in his short letter to Philemon. It is a model of epistolary composition. The heart of the writer pours itself out in language of the purest and most ardent affection to Philemon and a few friends whom he mentions by name. He then speaks of another friend and brother, whom he had found in the person of Onesimus,—a *fugitive slave*, as some would call him,—in terms very unlike what we are now in the habit of hearing from those who are engaged in returning fugitives to bondage.

Philemon resided at Colosse, a populous city of Phrygia, in Asia Minor. He appears to have been a distinguished Christian. Paul not only addressed him as such, but speaks of the church in his house. He addressed one of his epistles to that church, or at least to the Colossian Christians, doubtless including Philemon and the church in his house.

Philemon, it appears, had a servant—or slave, if you please—named Onesimus. For some reason Onesimus left his master—ran away, as we say now—and went to Rome, a distance of several hundred miles. No doubt he had often heard of Paul at Colosse, although it is probable that he never saw him; for there is no evidence that he was ever there. Be this as it may, it is certain that Onesimus attended upon the ministry of Paul at Rome, and that his instructions were blessed to his conversion. A close and affectionate intimacy appears to have grown up between the now venerable apostle and this man. Of course he would soon be made acquainted with the relations existing between him and Philemon, and the cause of the former leaving his service. After reflection, Paul determined to send Onesimus back to Philemon, and to that end he prepared the epistle before us.

After warmly commending Philemon for his kindness to the saints, he proceeds:—

"Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

What dignity and meekness are here blended! The appeal is perfectly irresistible, coming not only from Paul the aged, but Paul the prisoner,—a prisoner for Jesus' sake. He goes on:—

"I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds; which was in times past to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me; whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him that is my own bowels; whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel. But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever, not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee both in the flesh and in the Lord! If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, put that on mine account: I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it; albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. Yea, brother, let me

have joy of thee in the Lord; refresh my bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say."

At this time, when so much is said on the subject of slavery, this epistle is peculiarly interesting and important. We shall endeavour to examine it with the care and reverence due to the oracles of God.

It is true that slavery, or involuntary servitude, existed in the Roman Empire in the days of the apostles, as it had in all heathen countries from the earliest ages.

It is true that the relation of master and servant existed between Philemon and Onesimus. So far there can be no controversy.

It is probable that this relation existed prior to Philemon's conversion to Christianity, as it is certain that it existed prior to the conversion of Onesimus.

It was, according to the existing laws of the Empire, a lawful relation, and it was a relation which Christianity did not, in express terms, forbid. It found it existing, and acted upon it as it did upon every thing else. We shall see how it acted upon the relation as it existed between these two men.

Onesimus was a fugitive slave when Paul

found him, or, rather, he found Paul. This fact Paul knew, for doubtless Onesimus told him all about it. After a while, finding that Onesimus was a firm and devoted Christian, Paul felt it to be his duty to send him back to his former master. We say *former* master, because Onesimus seems to have attached himself to Paul as a voluntary servant. But now comes the important question:—

How did he send him back? As a slave, or as a freeman? The supporters of our fugitive-slave law, and its clerical apologists, have tried to draw much aid and comfort from this epistle. They point triumphantly to the fact that Paul himself recognised the right of one man to hold property in another, and returned a runaway slave to his owner and master. It is painful to hear and to read such arguments, or, permit us to say, such perversions.

How did he send him back? Did he bring Onesimus before a legal tribunal, and have his case adjudicated and the slave remanded? For, according to some of his interpreters, this ought to have been his course.

In what character did he send him back? Let Paul himself answer:—"*Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved:*

. . . *receive him as myself.*" Ponder these few words, and then say, if you can, that Paul remanded a *slave.* It is a gross slander upon the memory of that illustrious man, and a libel upon the holy religion he taught. "*Receive him as myself.*" Would Philemon have received and treated Paul as a slave? If so, then he received Onesimus at Paul's hand as a piece of restored property.

Onesimus, at Paul's request, went back to Philemon, carrying the letter from which we have quoted. On his part it was at once an act of filial and Christian obedience. He knew the reception that awaited him, and the errand would be one of joy and triumph. His return was voluntary; it was the act of a freeman; for no power but the power of love constrained him. The law of love was the only law brought to bear upon the case; and that law changed the man from a slave to a freeman. Were it not impious to do so, we might institute a comparison between the law to which Paul resorted in the case before us, and our law of 1850. Suffice it to say that we can perceive not a single feature in common. The contrast is as great as it can be. Think of Christ and Barabbas, and you have the embodiment of both.

We have no account of the meeting between Philemon and Onesimus; but we may safely say that Paul was not mistaken when he said in his letter, "Thou wilt do more than I say." In his epistle to the Colossians Paul mentions Onesimus in most affectionate and honourable terms, as "a faithful and beloved brother," the associate of Tychicus, his messenger. This was written probably at the same time that Onesimus was *remanded to slavery*, as some of the good people of our day are pleased to have it.

It is generally believed that Onesimus subsequently became a preacher of the gospel; but on this subject the Scriptures are silent.

In this transaction we see the legitimate working of Christianity. It does nothing by force or violence. It found Onesimus a slave; and, although it did not emancipate him *by authority*, yet it did emancipate him. How? By the law, the power, of love. Why did it do so? Why did it not leave him as he was? Because the condition in which it found him was incompatible with the spirit and genius of the gospel, which is the great law of love. Christ came "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound;" and we see in the

case before us how he does it. His gospel, like himself, does "*no violence;*" yet it is the great emancipator: those whom it makes free are free indeed. It first made Philemon free, free from selfishness, covetousness, revenge, and all that unholy train of passions which would have rendered him unable, because unwilling, to receive Onesimus as Paul desired him to do. That done, Onesimus is first fitted for freedom, and then put in possession of it; and thus the two men are reunited, but by a far different bond from that which first held them together.

We close with the single remark that a careful examination of this epistle has left upon our mind the conviction that where the gospel is free slavery cannot long exist; that it is a condition incompatible with its genius and spirit.

Types.

God, in all his works, points upwards, through an almost infinite range of being, beginning in the rudest and lowest forms of organic matter, and rising through order after order, until the line of progression terminates in himself. In the lowest orders of animal existence we find some of the rudimental lineaments of man, who is the head and crown of the animal series: so in man we behold the image of God,—rudimental, it is true, and but faintly developed, still real and unmistakable.

We may go to the lowest orders, and there we shall find not only analogy in structure, but some traces of intelligence, faint shadowings forth of mind, the power of choice and of design, and the possession of as much skill as the necessities of the creature require; all of which teach us that in the fulness of life as well as in death we may, with Job, say to the worm, "Thou art my mother and my

sister;" for we are all made on one common plan, we are all links of the same chain, we have one common type; we are the creatures of one common Father, who is of one mind and changeth not.

The man Adam was the type of man in every age and condition. In his primitive state of innocence he stood as the type of Him by whom and for whom he and all things were made. Having sinned, he fled from the divine presence; and there we see him as the type of a fallen, rebellious, and ruined race. Being recalled, we behold in him the type of every penitent sinner,—the lineaments of the saints of all ages.

In the quarrel of Cain with Abel we have a striking type of the opposition which the world has ever shown to Christ and his kingdom; and the terrible cry heard four thousand years afterwards in the streets of Jerusalem, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!" was but the utterance and culmination of the same spirit. In Adam we see a type of all the world, but in his two sons we have an emblem of the world divided.

The Ark is a striking figure of Christ, and Noah and his family of the great family of

the redeemed; and in the whole story of the flood, as given in the Bible, we have not only a simple and graphic narrative of facts, but these facts are themselves allegorical, setting forth, as in a parable, the great work of salvation.

In the call of Abraham we have a lively type of that call which brings us from the kingdom of nature to that of grace,—from Satan to God. At once the father and the exemplar of the faithful, his history is an ever-brilliant index to direct pilgrims of all ages in their path to heaven.

The exodus from Egypt is a vivid type of our deliverance from the bondage of sin and Satan, and of our introduction to the glorious liberty of the sons of God; and the journeyings of the Israelites in the desert, their wanderings, their rebellions, and the many mercies and chastenings of which they were the subjects, are all wonderfully emblematic of the Christian's life, from the moment of his espousals to the close of his conflict with temptation without and corruption within, until, crossing the Jordan of death, he arrives safely in the promised land.

In the history and writings of David we see, as in a mirror, every phase of a believer's

life and experience. We see Faith—beautiful, simple, childlike Faith—embodied, and living and acting before us. We listen enraptured to his lofty praise, and sympathetically catch his fire. In his grievous sins we discover the frailty and the hidden evils of our own hearts, and in his deep penitence we learn how to repent of our own sins. In sorrow and in joy, in the gloomy vale and on the sun-lit mount, whether lying at the portals of hell or standing at the gate of heaven, this man after God's own heart, this impulsive creature of circumstances, this pilgrim whose path to glory traversed the utmost extremes of Christian experience, is at once our most prominent exemplar and beacon; and his words are to all ages the common property of the church.

In the history of the long line of subsequent kings the thoughtful Christian will not fail to discover a type of his own alternate lapses and restorations; and in grateful remembrance of the goodness and faithfulness of Him who is his Guardian, Guide, and Keeper, he will exclaim, "He restoreth my soul; He maketh me to walk in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

In all the history of man, as drawn by the

pen of inspiration, the careful student will not fail to perceive that the pictures are general as well as special; that the characters are types of classes as well as individuals; that God in his providence and his word has revealed to us more truth, more knowledge of himself and of ourselves, by means of living examples, than we could possibly receive in any other way. Faith, hope, and charity, joy and sorrow, benevolence and selfishness, truth and falsehood, faithfulness and perfidy, patience and fretfulness, are set before us in living, breathing truth; and in the great centre of that system of grace and truth—Jesus Christ—all that is glorious in God and good in sinless humanity meet and blend and shine with a lustre as far surpassing that of the greatest and best of men as the sun surpasses the dew-drop that glitters in his beams; and, glorious as he is, he is clearly and plainly set before us for our contemplation,—the God veiled in the man,—so that "we all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The Marriage of Isaac.

The Bible is unlike other ancient histories; for, while these give us nothing but dry details of the doings of warriors and rulers, that leads us back to the times of the patriarchs, shepherds, lawgivers, judges, warriors, prophets, and kings whose lives and actions make up the staple of its narrative. The first bring those old generations down to us as they would bring dried and shrivelled mummies from the pyramids and catacombs of Egypt; the other transports us back to their tents and dwellings, and we seem to mingle with them in their pastoral life, and rejoice or mourn with them as we would with our present living friends. The stories of Joseph, of Ruth, of the Shunammite, of the lovely family who lived at Bethany, and of the still more interesting one of which Jesus was the head, are among the most notable examples of this living style of history.

In the 24th chapter of Genesis we have a

narrative of surpassing beauty and interest. Isaac has grown to manhood; Sarah, his mother, is dead; Abraham, the pilgrim and stranger as well as the patriarch and prince, is old and well stricken in age; and the Lord had blessed him in all things. He knew that he must soon be called home. His son was now the only object of his solicitude; for in his person was bound up the Hope of the world, the Desire of all nations, the Promised Seed.

The whole world was sinking into idolatry; the mist and darkness of universal apostasy was slowly settling down upon the race of man. One star alone remained unobscured, and that star was then only visible in his own child of promise; but by faith he saw, through the vista of many generations, the glorious day of the Son of man. Oh, what a terrible thought to that aged and faithful heart that this twinkling light, this star of hope, should be quenched forever in the floods of surrounding idolatry! True, he rested firmly in the promises of his covenant God; but his faith was attested by works and by all the means and precautions which were in his power.

There was something in the position of Abraham in the world which it is difficult for

us, in this age of civilization and far-reaching institutions, to understand. Called of God to leave Ur of the Chaldees, his native place, he was led by successive steps to Canaan, the land which God had said he would show him and give him.

This land was preoccupied by numerous petty princes and their retainers,—subjects, serfs, or servants, just as we may choose to call them. The sacred writers generally call them servants. Abraham set out from Haran with some servants or dependants, and was accompanied by Lot, his nephew. When he entered Canaan, he entered it as a pilgrim and stranger; yet he never became subject to any of the princes of the country, while at the same time he never acquired any dominion over the territory, nor did he build any city or permanent habitation. God blessed him greatly in the increase of his flocks and herds and in the number of his servants. "Thou art a mighty prince amongst us," said the sons of Heth; yet the only possession he ever acquired in the land was a burying-place. He was a shepherd-prince, and lived in peace with his neighbours all his days; yet were his servants trained to war,

and on at least one occasion he and they saw a little active service.

There is no relation now existing among men similar to that which existed between Abraham, Job, and other patriarch-princes and their dependants. Some people try to make it out that they were slave-holders, because we read that some of their servants were bought with money. Well, when the usages of slavery shall be the same as prevailed in the family of Abraham,—when the slaves shall share with the master in religious privileges, he being their priest and teacher as well as lord,—when slaves shall be trained to bear arms, as his were,—when they shall with him form one little kingdom, or, as it is expressed in the case of Job, one "household,"—and when there shall be no other institutions for human government, for the protection of the weak against the strong,—then will good men cease to find fault with slavery. These men were no more the *slaves* of Abraham than Joab was the slave of David, or the men of whom the Queen of Sheba spoke when she said, "Happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom." Abraham united in his own person the character and functions of

father, priest, and prince, or supreme magistrate. It is calumnious, therefore, to call him a slave-holder, and a flagrant error to suppose that the patriarchal system of government had any thing in common with the institution of slavery as maintained in our Southern States. The one was designed to secure and defend the rights of the poor and the helpless; the other to do the very reverse.

But we digress. Abraham had one old and faithful servant, who for a long time was the steward of his household, Eliezer of Damascus. It is said of him that he ruled over all that Abraham had. In virtue of his age and authority, even Isaac himself, now grown to manhood, was placed under his authority. To him Abraham said, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, [then the usual form of an oath,] and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." Eliezer gave the required pledge, and took upon himself this important and delicate trust. He felt the solemn responsibility of this commis-

sion; for Abraham had laid upon him two charges,—one, that Isaac should not take a wife from among the daughters of the Canaanites, the other, that in no case was he to allow him to go to Mesopotamia. Then the question arose, Suppose the woman should not be willing to come with the aged servant? "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee," said Abraham, "then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again."

At the call of God, Abraham had himself left his kindred and the land of his nativity to dwell as a stranger in another land. He broke off all intercourse with the one country, and formed no alliances with the other. Paul beautifully expresses this in the 11th chapter of Hebrews:—"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." The same law which bound him, the same covenant into which he had entered, was equally binding upon his son. Under no circumstances, therefore, was he to return to his father's kindred and native country. The separation was perfect and entire; and the woman who should be his companion in life

must first become a pilgrim and a stranger like himself.

No doubt Abraham felt assurance that God would prosper them in this solemn and important business; but his language shows us that he had received no divine revelation to that effect. God had left him to the exercise of a wise discretion, just as he leaves us in the conduct of our families and our business.

The Bible calls Eliezer Abraham's servant, and so he was; but it was in the same sense in which an ambassador is the servant of his sovereign. In accordance with the usages of the times, he set out on his journey with ten camels, with attendants, and with rich presents for her who was to be the wife of Isaac, and for her friends. His destination was Nahor, a city of Mesopotamia, nearly four hundred miles from Canaan,—a long journey for those days.

Arrived at the walls of the city, the good old man felt the full difficulty of his position and his need of more than man's wisdom and sagacity; for among the thousands of Nahor how would he dare to choose a wife for Isaac? With a faith strong as his master's and simple as that of a little child, he referred the matter

entirely to God. "And he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink, and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also; let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master." Was ever prayer so direct, so childlike, so circumstantial? It is the very embodiment of faith; and not only so, but it contains a lifelike picture of those primitive times,—a picture which we may contemplate from half a dozen different stand-points and every view be equally interesting and beautiful.

The wall of the city, under which Eliezer stood, shows us the insecurity of those early times.

The well by the wall, to which the inhabitants resorted, shows us how scarce, and therefore precious, was that beverage with which we are so profusely supplied.

"The daughters of the men of the city" coming out to draw water, not only for domestic purposes, but for the supply of thirsty animals, is another beautiful feature in the scene. "Say not," says Solomon, "that the former days were better than these;" but we fear that few of the daughters of the men of our cities are so usefully or healthfully employed.

The request that Eliezer proposed to make, and the response he required, as a sign or token of the divine will, is an evidence that he well knew the kindness of the female heart. It was a good mark of a good and kind woman, and of one that would make an excellent wife. Beauty, or wealth, or rank, was not asked.

Before he had done speaking, Rebecca came out of the gate of the city with her pitcher upon her shoulder. She was very pretty, or, as the sacred writer expresses it, "very fair to look upon." She went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. Good old Eliezer, having uttered his prayer, did not forget what he had asked for, as many of us are too apt to do, but proceeded immediately to seek the token for which he had prayed. Running to the maiden, he said, "Let me, I

pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." Promptly, and with the gushing kindness of a true woman's heart, she replied, "Drink, my lord;" and, lowering the pitcher from her shoulder to her hand, she gave him drink; then—exactly as he had prayed that it might be—she added, "I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking." Truly, here was a pretty serious undertaking for a woman. There were ten camels; and they drink enormously after traversing a dry region, as these had done. But she did it; and, as pitcher after pitcher was poured into the trough, how must the old man's heart have bounded with joy at the prompt and full answer to his prayer! Ah! Rebecca, you are giving him water to drink that you know not of.

This done, Eliezer took a golden ear-ring and a pair of massive golden bracelets and put them upon her, and then asked her whose daughter she was, and whether there was room in her father's house to lodge in. Having told him whose daughter she was, she added, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in." In the fulness of his heart, Eliezer "bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord, and said,

Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren."

Rebecca's brother Laban, having ascertained in some way that a stranger stood at the well, ran out to proffer that hospitality which was then and still is a charming characteristic of the people of the East. There were no public houses; and what are called inns in the Scripture probably did not then exist. These inns were large square buildings, erected at public expense, where caravans and other travellers could find shelter; but usually they had to provide and prepare their own food. They are more properly called caravansaries. Whether there was any such establishment at Nahor or not, Laban quickly prepared his house for the reception of the stranger and his attendants, and made provision for their animals. In this he did nothing remarkable for that age of the world. In the 18th chapter of Genesis we have a most interesting account of Abraham's hospitality, and, in the 19th, of Lot's. Paul enjoins the same virtue upon Christians, adding, "for thereby some

have entertained angels unawares," alluding to Abraham, Lot, Manoah, and perhaps others.

Before Laban reached Eliezer, his sister had informed him of who the stranger was, and of all that had taken place. He then went to him, and in the fulness of his heart he exclaimed, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord: wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house and room for the camels."

Now let us follow the earnest old man into the house. Almost immediately food was set before him; "but he said, I will not eat until I have told mine errand." He then told them the whole story of Abraham's prosperity, of his son, of his own commission in regard to obtaining a wife for him, of his prayer for a token from the Lord as to the person he had chosen for Isaac's wife, and of his finding in Rebecca the exact token for which he had prayed. "And now," said he, "if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." Truly this was coming quickly to the point in so delicate a matter; but the simple-hearted faith and piety of Eliezer had brought the divine will

to be so unmistakably manifest in the transaction that there could be but one answer to his proposal. "The thing proceedeth from Jehovah," said Laban and Bethuel: "we cannot speak unto thee bad or good." The consent of all parties was at once obtained. Then Eliezer again bowed his head and worshipped; and, having bestowed upon the bride elect and upon her friends the princely presents with which Abraham had furnished him, he and his attendants ate and drank. Can the history of the world show us another such ambassador, if we except Him who said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work"?

Very naturally Rebecca's mother and brother plead with Eliezer that she might abide with them a little while longer, if it were but ten days. But no; it must not be. "Hinder me not," said the faithful man, "seeing the Lord hath prospered my way." Rebecca promptly consented to go the next morning; and so they set off, followed by the benedictions of the family.

At length the company reached Canaan; and the first incident mentioned is their meeting with Isaac, who had gone in the evening to walk and meditate. A stranger

in the land of his birth, without brother or sister, his mother's grave yet wet with his tears, and his venerable father sinking under the infirmities of age, well might he commune with his own heart and with his covenant God as he walked and was sad. And the embassy of Eliezer would, moreover, be a subject of anxiety and solicitude. But presently he was aroused by the sound of an approaching caravan, and, looking up, he saw Eliezer and his companions coming, accompanied by a young woman. Suffice it to say that Rebecca immediately became the wife of Isaac,—the mistress of his mother's tent; "and," adds the historian, with that peculiar tact which throws a volume of meaning into a few simple words, "*Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*"

Jacob's Interview with Pharaoh.

Driven by famine, the patriarch Jacob and his family repaired to Egypt, at the invitation of his son Joseph, of which God had made him the ruler. His life had been one of sorrow and various and sore trials. But God had been his Guide and Portion; and now, in his old age, he has found a haven of rest in a strange land, under the protection of his illustrious son, with all his children and grandchildren around him.

"And Joseph brought in Jacob his father and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my pilgrimage been." Is this the language of complaint? No; but it is the language of humility. At that age of the world, perhaps more than at present, length of days

challenged veneration and respect; but Jacob endeavoured to convince the king that no special honour was due to him on account of venerable age. His days, in his own esteem, had been not only few but evil, marred by sin and clouded with sorrow. His life—his long life, as we would esteem it—appeared to him, in the retrospect, but as a vapour which had appeared for a little while and was about to vanish away. The years of his childhood now looked like a speck in the dim distance. The twenty-one years of service in Padan-aram were now contracted to a handbreadth in the receding vista of memory. The frequent visits of his Almighty Friend and Guardian and Guide would seem to crowd nearer and nearer together in his recollection as the every-day scenes of life faded away; and his own grievous sins would, like David's, be ever before him.

This was the time when the period of human life was rapidly diminishing. Noah had lived nine hundred and fifty years, and died but one year before the birth of Abraham. The life of Shem was protracted to six hundred years. Arphaxad, his son, lived four hundred and thirty-eight years. At the death of Arphaxad, Abraham was one hundred

and twenty-five years old, and Isaac twenty-five. Thus we see how rapidly the span of human life was diminishing. Jacob's whole life extended to one hundred and forty-seven years, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten. But two hundred years after the death of Joseph Moses wrote, "The days of our years are three scoreyears and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away;" and so the period of man's life has continued ever since. Moses himself lived to a much greater age, but his life and strength were miraculously preserved. During a period of about eight hundred years, therefore, extending from the Flood to the time of Moses, human life was reduced from almost one thousand years to less than one hundred. It need not excite surprise, therefore, to hear Jacob say, after having lived one hundred and thirty years, that his days had been few.

"The days of the years of *my pilgrimage*," says the patriarch. Although life and immortality had been but darkly and obscurely revealed, yet Paul expressly tells us that Jacob was one of those who looked for "a better country, even an heavenly," and so

regarded themselves as "strangers and pilgrims upon earth." "My pilgrimage!" The language does not refer to his wanderings in early life, nor to his late journey to Egypt; but it teaches us that Jacob habitually regarded life as only a journey, a pilgrimage through this world to his everlasting habitation,—to those mansions of which the Saviour speaks. Not a journey to the grave,—for even that is but a temporary resting-place for the mortal part of the believer,—but to heaven.

There is something sublimely beautiful, as well as sad, in the picture which the patriarch gives of his own life. His days had been few,—far short of those of his ancestors. Jacob sighed at the thought that the strength of man, which, a few generations back, had enabled him to sustain the buffetings of nearly a thousand years, was so rapidly giving way that he found himself a wreck at the end of a single century. And his days had been not only few, but evil. His life had been one of sorrow. Jacob had been sorely chastened, but it was all for his profit; and now he stands at the end of his rough journey filled with hope, and with little else to do but to bestow his parting blessing upon those whom he loved, and take his place with

Abraham and Isaac in the kingdom of his Father.

It is evident from Jacob's language that he habitually regarded this life as only a pilgrimage. The very word presupposes a place towards which the pilgrim is journeying,—a rest, a home, an abiding habitation. It is one thing to feel and acknowledge this at times when solemn scenes or serious reflections press the truth upon the mind; but it is a very different thing to entertain it as an habitual, ever-present thought. This is what we ought ever to aim at, to cultivate and cherish, until the thought of heaven shall be the same to us as the thought of home is to the returning traveller after a long and weary journey. Then will the evils and toils of the journey be lightly esteemed and easily borne, and the provisions for the pilgrimage, which "the Lord of the way" has kindly provided, be estimated at their proper value, thankfully received, and richly enjoyed. If our days be few, it is well: we are the sooner home. If they are evil, if the way is rough and toilsome, no matter: heaven will bring us sweeter rest. The Saviour's command is, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, that where your treasure is your

hearts may be also." This precept harmonizes sweetly with that of which we are speaking; for let our treasure and our hearts be in heaven, and it will be easy to feel that our life is but a pilgrimage,—that we are going home.

Jacob lived one hundred and forty-seven years on earth; but he has already been more than three thousand years in heaven. His pilgrimage on earth to us appears to have been long and weary; but how short it must appear in his view now! His trials were severe; but now he sees that those light afflictions, which were but for a moment, worked for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Now, let us try to realize that we are on a pilgrimage as Jacob was. He got safely home long ago; but no safer than we shall, if we have made our peace with Jacob's God and put ourselves under his protection. It is our privilege to walk in clearer light than Jacob had, and to reach home by a shorter journey. But when we arrive where he is, we shall sit down with him and all the ransomed host in the kingdom of our Father; for our Saviour has told us that they shall come from the east and from the west, and

shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in that kingdom. In a little while, dear reader, you and I shall be there too, provided we have not taken this world as our portion and laid up our treasure here.

Moses in Exile.

THAT is a noble testimony which Paul bears to the character of Moses,—that "he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." In this we discover the true secret of his subsequent excellence and honour; for among great men he stands without a peer. All the conquerors, kings, and statesmen of antiquity dwindle into pygmies when brought into comparison with him; and the Holy Spirit himself testifies that "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty

hand, and of all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel."

Thrown by the providence of God, in his early childhood, into the family of the King of Egypt, and yet not deprived of the instruction of a pious mother, he grew up to manhood under the most favourable circumstances for the development of his mental powers; for Stephen tells us that he was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." In this condition of life he remained until he was "full forty years old." Possessing native talents, doubtless, of the highest order, and enjoying all the advantages that royalty could throw around him, his advances in knowledge and administrative skill were as far and as high as human erudition was able to carry him. We see in this how God educates his servants and fits them for their work. He lets man do what man can do, and what man cannot do he does himself. Little did the wise men of Egypt dream that their lessons to their gifted pupil were fitting him for the performance of those terrible acts which struck terror to the hearts of the Egyptians and humbled that proud and oppressive nation to the dust. And as little

did Gamaliel think that in the talented and earnest Saul of Tarsus he was developing powers to be consecrated to the service of Jesus of Nazareth.

But, surrounded as Moses was with all the wisdom, wealth, honour, and splendour of the Egyptian court, the Holy Spirit kept alive those holy principles which had been instilled into his infant mind by Amram and Jochebed, his parents. He ceased not to remember that he was an Israelite, and that he owed homage and obedience to Israel's God.

At that mature age God led him away from the scenes of his earlier advantages by a series of mysterious events. The children of Israel were at this time in a state of bondage. They were not *slaves* in the sense in which we understand that word, but, like the serfs of Russia, they were compelled to labour a part of the time without compensation. I believe this labour was performed for the State, and not for individual masters, as in our Southern States; nor do I believe that the Israelites in Egypt were ever regarded as *property*. That they laboured for the State, and not for individual masters, is plainly intimated in Ex. i. 11, where it is

said, "They built for Pharaoh treasure-cities, Pithom and Raamses."

It was policy rather than cupidity that led the king and people of Egypt to afflict this portion of their population; for they were there, as they have ever since been, a peculiar people, differing from the Egyptians in language, manners, customs, and religion; living apart, refusing to amalgamate or conform, and yet growing prodigiously in numbers and power. This growth alarmed the politicians of Egypt, and revelation has given us the result of their deliberations upon the subject:—"Come on, [said they,] let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that when there falleth out any war they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them out of the land." So they did evil that good might come, or rather they did one evil that another anticipated evil might be averted. But, however wise such counsel might then be in the eyes of the statesmen of Egypt, we know from the history of the subsequent events that nothing could have been more foolish. But some of us counsel and act just as foolishly. We acquiesce in a system of wrong and oppression more degrading to humanity than

Egyptian bondage, to save our national union; while others of us are ready to denounce and disfranchise the stranger that is within our gates, not for what he has done, but for fear of what he may do.

But let us return from this digression. At forty years of age it came into the heart of Moses to visit his oppressed brethren. Great thoughts dilated his heart. No doubt he had some vague premonitions of his high destiny as the deliverer of Israel, for Stephen plainly tells us so. Acts vii. 25. Patriotism, indignation, and high resolve glowed in his breast; but no doubt they were mingled with baser passions and motives. His first act was one of indiscreet vengeance. The next, although right in itself and performed with dignity, resulted in a way so mortifying to himself that his ambition was checked and his fears aroused. He saw that neither he nor they were yet ready. Having incurred the wrath of Pharaoh by slaying the Egyptian, and his authority being repudiated by his brethren, he had no recourse but flight.

We next find him, a poor, weary, dejected fugitive, sitting by a well in the land of Midian. Thus was Moses led by his all-wise Teacher from the schools of Egypt to a

higher school, in which he was kept another forty years. Here it was that he was chastened and disciplined and made meet for the Master's use. Oh, how would that mighty and cultivated intellect work during that long period of comparative solitude, guided and illumined by the Holy Spirit! This was his Valley of Humiliation. Here he learned of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and became transformed from the fierce and impetuous hero we found him when he slew the Egyptian, to the meekest of men. Here, being poor, he filled the place at once of a son and a servant to his father-in-law, and kept his flock. Here he sustained the tender relations and discharged the duties of a husband and father; and here, doubtless, he penned those historical and poetical books and psalms which treat of events in which he was not an actor, and of grand truths which are eternal and unchangeable in their nature.

The pen of inspiration is almost silent respecting the personal history of Moses during this long period. We have a glimpse of him as he enters into his state of exile, and is introduced into the family of Jethro, at the age of forty years, and then the curtain

drops upon him until at the age of fourscore he is summoned to hold converse with Jehovah at the burning bush. We might indulge in any amount of fancy respecting both the inner and the outer life of this wonderful man during that long period; but to do so would be neither right nor profitable. That it was to him a school of discipline we know. That it was full of fiery trials we may safely infer from its effects; for we see him rash and impetuous when he entered it, meek and lowly in heart when he again appears. That it was a period of sorrow we may gather from the 90th Psalm, where faith struggles with despondency and the drooping soul labours to strengthen itself in God by fervent prayer. He had formerly hoped that it had been he who should redeem Israel from bondage; but they were still groaning, and he was fast approaching that age when the strength of man is but labour and sorrow. "Return!" he exclaims, in the agony of prayer, "O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Oh, satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear

unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it." Thus did the fervent heart of the saint, the brother, and the patriot plead with God, and in due time the prayer was abundantly and gloriously answered. At the period of life when other men are borne down with the labour and sorrow incident to old age, his youth was renewed like the eagle's, and he became the deliverer, leader, and lawgiver of his people, and for another forty years he performed a part higher and more august than was ever before or since given to mortal man.

Character of Solomon.

"Come near to me, I pray you," said Joseph to his awe-stricken brethren, just after he had told them who he was. "Handle me and see," said Jesus, after his resurrection, to his still more awe-stricken disciples, whose superstitious fears suggested the idea of a

spirit, a ghost, an apparition. It is the law of our being that whatsoever we would understand clearly we must examine closely, even familiarly; and that whatever we keep at a distance is invested with a greater or less degree of vagueness and mystery. And before we can love any object we must first become intimate with it; we must come near to it, and, if it may be so, handle it.

Well, if we may become familiar even with God himself,—if the disciples might even handle their risen Lord,—surely we may examine closely the great men whose living portraits are embodied in the word of God. They are there for that purpose. They are mirrors in which we may see ourselves; and their experience ought to be our guide. It is a great and hurtful mistake to suppose that Abraham, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Samuel, and David, and the prophets, were invested with sanctity unattainable in the present day. It is far better to regard them as our fellow-servants, more highly favoured than ourselves in some respects, and less so in others. It is the vague and erroneous notion of the unapproachable greatness and holiness of these Bible worthies that keeps the great body of God's modern

people so unfamiliar with them, and chills that brotherly affection that ought to be felt for them. We hold them near enough to be admired, but too far off to be loved.

These general remarks are intended to be applicable to all the great and good characters set forth in the inspired volume; but there is one whose magnificent portrait flits before us in a gorgeous but ever-varying panorama, —sometimes enshrined at once in earthly glory and in the beauty of holiness, and again we see him marred and battered, and driven before a whirlwind of temptation, but still great,—"wandering, but not lost."

The first notable incident that we read of SOLOMON, after he ascended the throne of his father David, is his humble prayer for wisdom. The prayer itself is evidence of wisdom far beyond that of ordinary men. The root of the matter was in him, and from that sprung his extraordinary clearness and quickness of perception of all manner of truths. Very soon afterwards, in the strange dispute between the two mothers, this wisdom, or, rather, this sagacity, was practically displayed in the judgment which he gave. The assertions of one woman were pointedly contradicted by those of the other. No other

human being witnessed the transaction: so no witness could be called to settle the dispute. The king saw and acknowledged the utter impossibility of deciding the case by any ordinary procedure of law and evidence: so he instantly determined, by a test of terrible severity, to appeal for the truth to the irrepressible fountain of maternal love. "Bring me a sword," said the royal judge. "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." This was too much for the real mother, as Solomon knew that it would be. "O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it," said she; but the other coldly and unfeelingly agreed to the proposal. The case was now clear enough, and the living child was restored to its true mother.

In this incident we have an example of the quick, penetrating, far-reaching mind of Solomon, and of the almost unerring sagacity with which he could find and apply means to accomplish his ends. This affair not only proved that he had a deep insight into the human heart, but it also shows that he had extraordinary inventive genius. Any man could understand that both these women knew the truth, and that one of them told

the truth; but the king silenced both the disputants, and made Nature—which cannot lie—speak. Doubtless this was the kind of wisdom for which Solomon prayed; and, in view of the responsibilities of the high office he was about to fill, nothing could be more valuable or desirable.

To a quick, penetrating judgment Solomon added a searching scrutiny into the nature of all things, both moral and physical, that could be known. As a moralist, we have in the Book of Proverbs a world of practical wisdom. As a naturalist, it is said that he studied the nature of every thing, from the cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. As a king or magistrate he surpassed all other men, so that the fame of the wisdom of his administration spread over the then known world, and the rulers of all nations sought his friendship and counsel.

But to this wonderful mental endowment it pleased God to add other gifts almost beyond measure,—wealth, prosperity, honour, influence. In his person and in his outward estate, therefore, Solomon had all that the largest ambition could desire of earthly good; and as it was given to Job to prove experi-

mentally the last degree of earthly adversity, so was it given to Solomon to exhibit to us a living example of the opposite condition. It is in this point of view that the study of his life becomes instructive and profitable. He was not satisfied with the mere abstract knowledge of any thing. He must have experience: so he appears to have tested the value of every thing by actual trial. Hence he says, "Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great *experience* of wisdom and knowledge; and *I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly.*" And again: "I sought in mine heart to *give myself unto wine,* yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; *and to lay hold on folly,* till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life." Strange and perilous experiment! Plunge into folly, and even inebriation, so that by the experimental test he might know their value, and thus become more wise and be enabled to "see what was good for the sons of men." Of intoxicating drink he has given a faithful and solemn report in Prov. xxiii. "Who hath woe? Who

hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not. When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." Who but an experienced inebriate could give so vivid a picture of the wine itself, of the revolting concomitants of drunkenness, of the confusion of brain and the irregular passions which follow, and of the incoherent and passionate expressions of returning reason under the lash of an outraged conscience? Thus did Solomon give himself unto wine that he might acquaint his heart with wisdom. We may not say that he did well in so doing; but we may say that it was well for "the sons of men" that

he did. If we may not thank Solomon for the solemn lesson, we may thank God.

Elegant and gorgeous voluptuousness was indulged in by this extraordinary man to an extent beyond the power of any to rival; and in this lay his most dangerous snare, his greatest error, his darkest sin; and this, more than any thing else, casts a deep and lasting stain upon his character. Strong as he was, he did not come out of that fire uninjured; for, like Samson in the lap of Delilah, he was shorn of his glory and strength; and when he tried to shake himself he found that he had become weak and like any other man. His alliance with idolatrous women led him to patronize and even to practise idolatry; and thus he became a snare to his own people, and greatly offended the God of his fathers. To him wine, and music, and every other species of pleasure, were like the cords on the arms of the strong man. He broke them as though they had been threads touched by fire; but the ensnaring influence of women was too strong even for him. Proverbs v., vi., vii.

Solomon took great delight in making improvements of every kind. Of these he tells us in the second chapter of Ecclesiastes; and

having fine taste and skill, together with almost unlimited wealth, no man can ever hope to rival him in this department of laudable and enlightened pleasure. He says, "I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour." For seven years Solomon was employed, with all his power and skill and forces, in building the Temple; but, that done, he seems to have turned his attention to other works. He built Tadmor in the desert,—believed to be the same that was afterwards called Palmyra, the splendid ruins of which are the admiration of travellers to this day; and the pools of water of which he speaks are yet existing in good preservation a few miles from Jerusalem.

And what was the result of all that power, and wealth, and well-directed industry? Let Solomon himself answer. "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of

spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." What a report from a man who had all that heart could wish of this world's honour, power, wealth, and pleasure! These are not the words of some sour ascetic, scowling from his narrow cell upon a busy, bustling world, but of a man who had drank freely from every fountain of earthly joy,—a man who sought pleasure and enjoyment with all his heart, and found them in measure far beyond what any other man need hope for. They are the words of an honest, earnest, and wise man,—a man guided in all his researches after experimental wisdom by the Spirit of God. He, doubtless, often forgot, in the impetuous pursuit of ambition and pleasure, the object of his perilous wanderings; but his Guide did not. The rein was freely given to his giant propensities,—his thirst for knowledge, his kingly ambition, his fine tastes, his love of pleasure, and even the indulgence of his sensual appetites. They led him to the achievement of all that could be done or enjoyed by man; and what did it profit? What did it amount to? "Vanity and vexation of spirit," and "no profit." And yet these are the things for which men are

starving their souls, and even bartering their salvation.

If we would understand the character of Solomon aright, we must regard him as an explorer, a discoverer, in the great moral world extending from the portals of heaven to the purlieus of the bottomless pit; for he says himself, "I gave myself to know wisdom and to know madness and folly,"—not merely to know these things abstractly, but experimentally. God in his providence furnished him with the means, and gave him strength sufficient for the fearful tour, and finally brought him back an humbler, a wiser, and a better man, and has given to us, in the sententious language of his erratic servant, the rich stores of wisdom which he brought back when he returned from his wanderings.

Solomon's mission was to shed light upon this world, its interests, its profits, and its pleasures, and to show us what is valuable and worth seeking, and what is vain, deceptive, and unworthy of pursuit, and thus lead our feet into the paths of true wisdom. The Book of Proverbs is an exhaustless treasury of practical wisdom; the Book of Ecclesiastes is a continuation of the same sententious expositions of the truth, blended with the

result of the strange and varied personal experience of the author. Oh, how earnestly he labours to convince "the sons of men," for whose good he tried every thing and trod paths of sin and folly from which any other man would have been swept to perdition, of the emptiness, worthlessness, and vanity of the things which the great majority of men esteem so highly and pursue so eagerly. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

How solemn and impressive is his conclusion, the sum total of all his wisdom and experience! "Let us hear [says he] the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole —— of man." In our version the last clause reads, the "whole *duty* of man;" but the word is supplied, and weakens the force of the sentence. It is elliptical, and admits of being filled up with many words. It may stand as it is, "the whole duty of man;" or we may paraphrase it in the words of the Catechism, "the chief end of man;" but, to maintain the full energy of Solomon's words, we must say "the *sole* end of man." Or we may paraphrase it again, and say, "the only true interest or good of man." Like Paul,

Solomon appears to have cast every thing out of his heart but the fear of God and the spirit of obedience. In him sin abounded, it is true; but we have good reason to believe that grace still more abounded. The very fact that he found the joys of life unsatisfying, that he did not set his heart upon riches, and that he found nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit in his most splendid achievements, is proof enough that he never lost his relish for the Chief Good, and that he returned from his wanderings like Noah's dove, and found rest in the Ark,—"the bosom of his Father and his God."

Elisha, Naaman, and Gehazi.

"Doth Job fear God for nought?" was the language of Satan, when he would bring an accusation against the most upright man of his age. Satan could find no flaw in the service which Job rendered to God; but he attacked the motive. "Hast not thou made an hedge about him," he asks, "and about his house, and about all that he hath on every

side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased on every side. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." It pleased God to put Job to the test; and the result showed that the devil's supposition was as false as it was mean. Job's piety arose from true love to God, and not from love of the world.

Job stands as a representative of a numerous class; for the number of the truly pious is large. Satan, on the other hand, is the representative of another large class, composed of persons who, unable to conceive of motives of action higher than those which arise from mercenary or selfish interests and instincts, are continually accusing those of the other class as Satan charged Job. It is one of the meanest manifestations of the satanic spirit; and, alas! it is one of the most common as well as one of the most pernicious. Let this vile thought once get a firm lodgment in the heart of a sinner, and it forms a shield which the arrows of conviction cannot penetrate. Under this strong delusion the Church of Christ is regarded as a community of hypocrites, and the sacred

office itself as only an easy way of making a living.

No general slander can long exist without some real, substantial aliment. That there were some in the days of Job and before him who did not serve God for nought, we may safely infer from the fact that Satan supposed, or pretended to suppose, that Job was of the number. Very likely he thought so, for Satan is not omniscient; and, like many of his followers, he is fond of drawing very broad conclusions from very narrow premises. So the devil caught the idea that Job was a hypocrite from having met with some such characters before, just as some people now-a-days generalize after the same fashion, after having discovered one or more spurious professors of religion, or imagined that they have done so.

It is a small matter to the true Christian to be accused as Job was. It may grieve the heart, and it may damage his influence a little; but that is all. God in due time will "bring forth his righteousness as the light and his judgment as the noonday," as he did Job's. But it is a sad, sad thing to the unhappy being who entertains and cherishes the thought; for while it lodges in his heart

he is repelled by it from the only ark of safety. And how came he by it? He saw that some one or more in the range of his observation were of such a character that it was impossible to give them credit for sincerity in their religious profession; and so, generalizing, as before intimated, he comes to the same conclusion that Satan came to in the case of Job. Upon such a man the preaching of the gospel is not likely to exert much influence; for although the words of the preacher may not be gainsaid, and conscience may plead with the half-alarmed heart that what he says is true, yet the miserable thought—whether expressed or not—"it is his trade to talk so," utterly effaces every salutary impression. How fearful a responsibility, therefore, rests upon professors of religion as to the manner in which they act before the world! for by the exhibition of a worldly spirit or of unholy passions one man may be the means of lodging this deadly impression in many a heart.

How very careful the apostles were to avoid even the appearance of this evil! Like their divine Master, they chose a condition of utter poverty, and trusted to Him in whose hands are all hearts to supply their daily

wants,—not by miracle, but by the free-will offerings of his people. Even Satan himself could not have had the face to charge them with mercenary motives.

God's book is like himself, past finding out to perfection,—inexhaustible. The words of other books are employed to express one idea only at a time; but the words of this book are living words, possessing creative energy. One idea being expressed as no other words can express it, look at the sentence or the narrative again, and behold another and another, more and more precious and spiritual. A sublimely-instructive allegory glows upon the face of the simplest historic narrative; and where the superficial reader sees only the character of an ancient saint or sinner, the thoughtful student finds in it a key to unlock the strange mysteries of his own heart. Individuals in the Bible are representatives of classes to be found living and acting in all ages. And not only are they the representatives of classes, but personifications of the various phases and shades of character found in all nations and all ages. Let the careful Bible-student take, for example, the twelve disciples of Jesus, and he will find

that each had a peculiar idiosyncrasy which distinguished him from all the others, and that among them are to be found all the peculiarities of character to be found among all the Christians that have ever lived.

We say nothing in this connection about Adam being the representative of his posterity, nor of Abraham being the father of the faithful, nor of many Old-Testament saints being types of Christ; but, with the foregoing observations, we proceed to speak more particularly of three remarkable characters, one of whom allegorically personifies the gospel; the second the world lying in wickedness; and the third that monstrous system of corruption which has converted the house of God into a den of thieves.

The prophet ELISHA was living in poverty and neglect, but still active and zealous, in Jericho. Every opportunity to do good and to impart instruction was joyfully improved by him. Like Him of whom he was a type, it was his meat and drink to do the will of Him who sent him. It was at this time that NAAMAN the Syrian was informed by a captive Israelitish maid that there was a prophet in Israel who could recover him of the deadly plague of leprosy under which he was sinking

to a loathsome and horrible death. Naaman came, as the world always comes, with pomp and parade, and with his hands filled with costly gifts. He first applied to the King of Israel; but he could do nothing. "Let him come to me," said the prophet: so the afflicted but proud Syrian sought the humble dwelling of the prophet, and acted as if he intended rather to order and pay for his miraculous services than to solicit them as an humble suppliant. The prophet sent a message to him directing him what to do,—simply to wash in Jordan,—but deigned not, in his present state of feeling, to show him the light of his countenance. How similar is this to the dealings of the Saviour with the alarmed but unsubdued sinner!

The whole proceeding is distasteful to the proud heart of the Syrian general. The prophet disregards his rank and dignity, and the means prescribed are altogether too simple, and therefore too humiliating. Naaman had made up his mind that either he or the prophet, or both, must do some great thing; but in this he only acted as the whole world has acted since the creation. The apostle says the preaching of Christ is to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks

foolishness: so Elisha's washing in Jordan was to Naaman foolishness, and likely to have proved a stumbling-block over which he had stumbled into a wretched eternity. Finally, however, through the persuasion of his servants, and from a sense of his hopeless condition, his proud heart gave way, and, like an humble seeker of salvation, he went down alone into Jordan, and there found, to his great joy, that God did indeed do a great thing for him. One minute ago he was an ulcerous leper, loathsome even to himself; now he is whole, strong, pure, and beautiful, clothed with the fair flesh of a little child, and, better still, with the spirit of a little child. Behold here the type of a new creature in Christ Jesus. Then look again, and you will see a type of the primitive Church.

Naaman acknowledges and blesses the God of Israel, and in the fulness of his heart desires to make the prophet rich, by bestowing upon him a large sum of money and other costly gifts. If ever a man might have properly received a present from another, this seemed to be the occasion. The work was done. The gift of Naaman was not at all in the nature of a *quid pro quo*, but purely an offering of gratitude. And then Elisha had

at this time under his care and tuition more than a hundred young men, sons of the prophets, to whom this money would have been, according to modern ideas, a most happy relief; for they were very poor, as we learn from the affair of the "death in the pot," and from the distress which one of them evinced at having dropped a borrowed axe into water so deep that he could not reach it, and to recover which Elisha worked a miracle by causing it to swim. For these and many other reasons we should suppose that the prophet might very properly have taken the money; but Infinite Wisdom forbade; and that was enough for him, and it is enough for us.

Thus far the narrative is delightful to contemplate. Naaman is not only healed, but he seems to have become a simple-hearted, humble, and grateful believer,—a sinner saved by grace; for, with all his power and wealth, he was saved, healed, and redeemed without money and without price. All the glory was God's, all the priceless benefits were his. How inconceivably glorious must the Lord God of Elisha and of Israel have appeared in the eyes of this newly-awakened heathen when he saw that his servant the

prophet cared not for the wealth of this world, although surrounded with every aspect of outward poverty! So did the Church appear in the eyes of the heathen world in the days of the apostles; and hence the power which accompanied the preaching of the word. There was no attempt then to serve both God and mammon upon the same altar.

But now the scene changes to one extremely painful. GEHAZI, the servant of Elisha, was present at the closing interview between his master and the Syrian general; and in his eyes the refusal of his master to receive the proffered present was folly in the extreme. However superior his master might be to him in some things, he had no doubt of his own superior sagacity in respect to the affairs of *this* world and the value of money. Gehazi was a keen, penetrating, forward youth. When his master was desirous of conferring some favour upon the hospitable Shunammite, he was not long in suggesting what would likely be the most grateful benefit she could receive; and the prophet acted upon his suggestion. Puffed up with the privileges of his situation and the kindness and confidence of his master, doubtless he felt him-

self to be almost if not altogether a prophet himself; but in his own eyes shrewder and wiser than Elisha, for he exclaims to himself, "Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought; but, as the Lord liveth, *I* will run after him and take somewhat of him." Telling Naaman a gross falsehood about two sons of the prophet, the latter gladly bestowed upon him more than he asked. Then, having concealed his treasure, he returned to his master as if nothing had happened. Poor, deceived Naaman! he gave it freely, gratefully, gladly. His heart was oppressed with the weight of the free grace of which he had just been the recipient. His pride, utterly abased, struggled with the load. He wanted to do something, to make some return; and, having given two talents of silver (about 3200 dollars in our money) and two rich changes of raiment, his reviving pride of heart would feel much relieved. Oh, how was the gracious work of God in his heart marred by this unhappy outbreak of covetousness on the part of Gehazi!

We here lose sight of Naaman. Whether he continued to be a true and humble worshipper of Israel's God in the court of a heathen

prince, God only knows. One thing we know, that He who we trust began a good work in that man's heart was able to carry it on; but, if the good impressions he received were ever effaced, the guilt lies heavily upon the soul of Gehazi.

Although it has pleased God to draw a veil over the ultimate character and fate of Naaman, we are not left in the dark respecting that of Gehazi. We need not rehearse the narrative of the final interview between Elisha and his servant; but the awful sentence pronounced upon the latter on that occasion may well cause our ears to tingle and our hearts to tremble, lest we fall, in a spiritual sense, under the same condemnation. "*The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed forever.*"

Who does not see bodied forth, as in the LIVING epistles of God, the Saviour in Elisha, a lost world in Naaman, and a corrupt and mercenary Church in Gehazi? Ages after the last-named individual was gathered to his fathers,—after the Great Archetype had appeared and toiled and suffered for the redemption of a lost world, after thousands had washed in the fountain which he opened for sin and for uncleanness, and had become new

creatures, as Naaman had done,—men professing to be the servants of the Great Prophet began to act the part of Gehazi, and continued to do so from little to more, from bad to worse, until the greed of gain and the device of schemes to obtain it had thrust out of the Church every pure and healthy element and converted it into a curse rather than a blessing to the world. Purgatory, Auricular Confession, Masses, Indulgences, and many other such inventions, attest the ingenuity with which devices were framed to extort money from a world suffering under the leprosy of sin. Gehazi put in a false but plausible plea, and he put it forth in the name of his master: so does the Church of Rome. Naaman was deceived by Gehazi: so in like manner the nations of the earth have been for ages deceived by that Church. Gehazi got Naaman's money, as Rome has got the world's money: but Gehazi inherited with it Naaman's leprosy; and what has Rome inherited?

But let us tread softly. Rome stands before us as the woman taken in adultery stood before the Jews of old. We know that she is guilty, for she has been taken in the very act. But are we in a condition to cast a stone at

her? Are we Protestants entirely clear of the sin of Gehazi? Is he not in some sense our representative too, and does not some trace of the leprosy of Naaman for this cause cleave unto us?

Naaman came prepared to pay for his cure. He expected—nay, desired—to do so. The prophet had severely denied himself in order to give him a practical and striking proof that salvation and the blessing of God are not to be purchased with money; that all who come to Him must come as beggars, however rich they may be in this world's goods. Now, they know very little of the human heart who cannot understand that Naaman's sense of obligation would be greatly abated and his self-complacency very materially restored after his interview with Gehazi. As we are all men of like passions with Naaman, we are liable to be similarly affected when we reflect upon our own bounty contributed to the "support of the gospel." God wanted Naaman's heart, not his money; but Gehazi, acting upon the promptings of worldly wisdom, wanted his money; and it may be that in taking it he robbed the Saviour of Naaman's heart and of the glory of his salvation.

The Pot of Oil.

The Scriptures represent the goodness of God as an inexhaustible fountain, a boundless fulness incapable of exhaustion or even of diminution. "Out of his fulness have all we received."

Where, then, are we straitened? Certainly not in the fountain or well at which we draw, seeing that it is infinite in its fulness; but in ourselves, in our faith, in our expectations. Our faith or expectation may be justly compared to a vessel which we bring to a fountain. If it be very small, we can only carry away with us a very small supply. No matter how abundant the water in the well may be, it cannot do more than fill our vessel.

The centurion who applied to the Saviour to heal his servant came with almost unbounded faith and expectation. "Speak the word, and my servant shall live!" he exclaimed; and his draft, large as it was, was munificently honoured,—his vessel was filled

to the brim. Jesus himself marvelled at him, and, turning to those about him, declared that he had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. He then responded to the anxious applicant, "*As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.*" He had come with large expectations, but they were fully met; his vessel was a capacious one, but it was filled to overflowing. But let us ever bear in mind that what Jesus said to the centurion he says to all. That scripture is of no private interpretation.

A striking instance of this rule of administration in the kingdom of grace is afforded in the case of the widow's pot of oil, as related in the first seven verses of the 2d chapter of 2d Kings.

The husband and father, who had been a good man,—one who feared the Lord and was enrolled among the sons of the prophets,—died. He died poor; but, worse than that, he died in debt. His estate consisted of two sons, and nothing more, so far as the history informs us. But "two sons" would be a strange entry among a deceased man's assets in our day: so it requires a moment's glance at the law of Moses and the practice in Israel. See Exodus xxi. 2 for the law, and Nehemiah

v. 1–13 for the practice. Under the first, *perhaps*, a man's children might be sold to serve seven years in payment of a debt due by him in his lifetime; but under the second such a thing would have met with a most emphatic condemnation.

But at the time this poor woman lived in Israel, Baal was more worshipped than the God of Israel; and it is not likely that the merciful limitations and mitigations of servitude laid down in the divine law were very strictly observed. Be this as it may, the creditor seized, or was about to seize, the two sons of this afflicted woman, in order to sell them into slavery or servitude, or to keep them as bondmen, in satisfaction of the debt. It was very hard; but, as the creditor had law on his side, doubtless he thought it right and perfectly fair. The anguish and tears of the widow and fatherless were nothing to him: all he wanted was his "legal right."

What could she do? She had no means of paying the debt, nor friends able to pay it for her. In her deep distress she doubtless prayed earnestly to her own and her husband's God, and he heard her and directed her what to do. She applied to Elisha. After hearing her complaint, he inquired of her

what she had in the house. "Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house save a pot of oil," she replied. "Go," said the prophet, "borrow vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full."

What a strange command! Here was exercise for faith. What! fill large vessels out of that little pot? Even so; for the prophet of the Lord God of Israel had said it. "Borrow *not a few*" would ring in her ears and help her to enlarge her expectations. She is about to draw from an exhaustless fountain, and the only limit to her supply is her own faith or her ability to procure vessels.

She has ceased to collect vessels: she has either got all that she could procure, or as many as she could hope to fill, we do not know which. She has shut the door, and the wondrous work begins. With a hand trembling with emotion, she grasps the little pot of oil and pours out. The oil flows in a strong and unabating stream, and vessel after vessel is filled and set aside. In strong faith and joyful exultation she proceeds with her

miraculous work, and "Bring me yet a vessel" breaks with stronger and stronger emphasis from her lips. At length her son replies, to her oft-repeated command, "There is not a vessel more." Then, and not till then, the oil stayed. She sold her oil, paid the debt, saved her children from bondage, and had a surplus left for her ordinary support.

Here is a beautiful practical example of strong faith and large expectation to encourage us when we come to the Fountain of every blessing. The widow did not collect too many vessels, for they were all filled; and had she procured ten times as many the result would have been the same. In prayer we are not straitened in God, but only in ourselves; and when we approach into His presence who "giveth liberally and upbraideth not," but who is pleased and honoured in proportion to the largeness of our drafts upon him, it would be well to call to mind the abrupt and emphatic command of the prophet, "Borrow empty vessels; borrow not a few."

Agur's Prayer.

THE 30th and 31st chapters of Proverbs are an appendix to the book, and were probably written between the death of Solomon and the reign of Hezekiah. The one is composed of "the words of Agur, the son of Jakeh;" the other of "the words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him." History is silent respecting both these persons. Agur was probably an Israelitish prophet or teacher,—a head of one of the schools of the prophets, as he appears to have had at least two pupils, to whom his words were primarily addressed. Lemuel might have been some neighbouring prince, whose mother instructed him in the knowledge of the true God and in what constitutes true excellence.

But our object is not to write a criticism, but to lead to some profitable reflection upon the earnestly-expressed desire or prayer of Agur, comprised in the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses of the 30th chapter.

"*Two things have I required of thee: deny me them not before I die.*" The name of God is not mentioned in this clause; but the pronoun "thee" doubtless refers to him, for no other being could grant what Agur requires. "Deny me them not before I die." Let them be mine all my life.

These two things comprehended, in general terms, both his spiritual and temporal condition. Both refer to evils from which he desired to be delivered, so that he might be left free and unencumbered in the service of God and in the pursuit of his own highest good.

"*Remove far from me vanity and lies.*" This is exceedingly comprehensive, embracing erroneous views of truth, false maxims, wrong or mistaken motives, delusive hopes, and misplaced confidence. It embraces also all inordinate affections and engrossment of soul in the perishing things of this world.

"*Give me neither poverty nor riches.*" In Agur's view, both poverty and riches are evils. They are opposite conditions. All agree that poverty, abject poverty, is an evil; but in their hearts almost all believe that the opposite condition is good. Who among us could enter into his closet, and, alone with God, pray, with all his heart,

"Give me not riches"? But Agur did so; and he rendered a weighty reason why he did.

"*Feed me with food convenient for me.*" Agur desired what our Lord taught us to pray for,—daily bread. He desired that God would grant him a suitable supply of the good things of life; but he deprecated those luxuries which only gratify for the moment and vitiate and deprave the natural appetites as much as he did a lack of necessary food.

Now let us hear his reasons.

"*Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?*" Oh, what a world of meaning lies in these few energetic words! Well did Agur know the deceitfulness of his own heart. Well did he know that wealth is a dangerous snare. Well did he know that if he had it he would practically put it in the place of God. He would not do it *professedly;* he would not admit even to himself that he had done so; but yet he would, to a greater or less degree, do it. This he knew he would do, or, at least, he feared it. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," says the wise man; but Agur has shown us that he was not a fool, for he would not trust in his own heart. He felt, as every true believer has felt, that the heart is deceitful above all things, and des-

perately wicked: therefore he prays, "Give me not riches; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?" Not that he was afraid of saying so in words. Oh, no! he knew that he could be rich and still make a credible profession and offer up long prayers; but he trembled lest his heart, his affections, his trust, his confidence, should be transferred from his God to his property. He knew that where his treasure was, there his heart would be also. How did he know it? The Holy Spirit taught him the same truths, essentially, that Jesus, long afterwards, taught his disciples on the Mount. Agur prayed, "Give me not riches." Jesus says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." Both rendered a reason; and their reasons, although expressed in different terms, coincide in meaning. Both deprecated wealth, because its tendency is to alienate the heart from God. If this be so,—if this be its general, almost universal, effect,—how can any one who has the love of God glowing in his heart desire to be rich? No Christian prays to be rich, in express terms; but what is prayer?

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Utter'd or unexpress'd."

Who can believe that that which absorbs a man's time and thoughts and calls forth all his energies—that for which he plans, and toils, and quarrels, and sometimes even goes to law—is not an object of sincere desire? Certainly it is. None can doubt his sincerity here. Well, this sincere, abiding desire is prayer. God regards it as such, and answers according to the rule, "Seek and ye shall find." He has recorded one of those answers in Psalm cvi. 15:—"*He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.*" What an awful warning is here to those who are seeking, and successfully seeking, the very thing that Jesus commands them not to seek, —seeking that which Agur prayed that he might not find!

"*Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*" The poverty here spoken of is abject poverty, where many good things are really lacking,—that degree of poverty which crushes, debases, hardens, and brutifies the man. This is a condition into which the true child of God cannot fall; for he has said that those who trust in him "shall not want any good thing." It would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for a true believer to fall into such

poverty. Let any one read the 37th Psalm, together with the numberless promises to the same import scattered throughout the entire word of God, and he must acknowledge that we are warranted in using this strong language. Yet this is the kind of poverty that many professed Christians dread; and this dread corrodes the heart, and finally results in covetousness, worldliness, avarice, hardness in dealing, and sometimes in litigation, affording occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

Jonah's Gourd.

"THE fashion of this world passeth away," says the apostle. Man's works, like himself, are destined to sure, and often rapid, decay. We dwell in the midst of a revolution,—change succeeding change with kaleidoscopic swiftness.

"My days," says Job, "are like a weaver's shuttle;" and James asks, "What is your life?" and, in answer to his own question, says, "It is even a vapour, which continueth

for a little while and then vanishes away." And as man's days are, so are his works, so are his earthly possessions, and the things on which he has bestowed his utmost wisdom, his best skill, and in which he reposes his greatest confidence. When compared with the days of eternity, what is the difference between the Pyramids of Egypt and Jonah's gourd? Nor was there much difference in the estimate put upon them by their several proprietors.

The gourd perished quickly, but Jonah remains among us, a familiar personage, perverse and fretful, it is true, but still a true prophet, one of the redeemed, and one in whose truly imperishable history God has traced many of the glorious lineaments of his own character, and shown us how much perverseness, selfishness, and even cruelty, may still lurk in the bosom of a true believer. The Pyramids remain; but where are their builders? Their inward thought was that their works should continue forever and their dwelling-places to all generations. They called their lands after their own names. But, although their works remain, their history—nay, their very names—have perished. And although the labours of Champollion and

others have let in a little light upon Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities, it is only sufficient to render the darkness visible, the oblivion more appalling.

Joseph lived in Egypt about the time that the Pyramids were built, but he built no pyramids; he did not write his name on marble, but God stamped upon him the seal of immortality by causing Moses to write a few words in a book. Joseph still lives in that inspired record. He seems to mingle with us at our firesides. We see the anguish of his soul when he pleads with his cruel brethren. We follow him through his trying fortunes in Potiphar's house and in the prison. He stands in our presence before Pharaoh. We feel honoured in his advancement to honour and power; and when his brethren come, we too, like him, feel as if we would fain seek a place to weep; and before the story is over, Joseph has ceased to be regarded by us as a great man who lived and flourished more than three thousand years ago. Our hearts become knit to his heart, and almost unconsciously we enroll him among the number of our intimate and beloved friends. How flat, cold, perishing, and dead are all the records of Thebes, of

Palmyra, of Babylon, Nineveh, and Rome, although laboriously sculptured in enduring marble, when compared with the records of the pen of inspiration! Those, like their authors, appear and are admired for a little while, and then vanish away; while these remain in imperishable lustre, ever fresh, ever new.

In the short but impressive history of Jonah there is much that, properly considered, comes home with power to our own hearts. It is a mirror in which we may see ourselves. His reluctance to bear the testimony which God gave him to proclaim is well calculated to remind us of our own backwardness to rebuke, exhort, and warn those by whom we are surrounded, and who we are persuaded are yet unreconciled to God and exposed to his wrath. His unfortunate voyage to Tarsus, in direct disobedience to the divine command, the severity of God in sending a tempest to arrest his progress, and his wonderful deliverance from death, all attest the goodness of our heavenly Father in his dealings with his wayward and disobedient children. Happy are they whom the Lord chasteneth, because it is an evidence that they are the objects of his love.

Even in the belly of the fish Jonah experienced this delightful truth; for after he had uttered his complaint and prayer he exclaims, "I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."

A second time the Lord sends Jonah to Nineveh to denounce against it the sentence of destruction within forty days. This time Jonah went. His prophecy was uttered in a few ungracious words; but God accompanied his own word with power, and, contrary to Jonah's expectation or wish, the people humbled themselves and repented, and God had mercy upon them and spared them and their city. "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry."

In this bad temper Jonah went out of the city to a place where he supposed he could watch the event in safety, and where he could indulge in solitude his chagrin at the failure of his prophecy. But, while dwelling in his lonely booth, one of those hot, scorching winds, common in the East, prevailed, and distressed him greatly. To mitigate his sufferings, God caused a gourd to spring up in a single night: so the next day Jonah reposed with great comfort and delight under the

refreshing shade of its broad leaves; "and Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd." He loved his gourd and set his heart upon it, just as we set our hearts upon objects almost as transient and perhaps really not so satisfying. Jonah's regard for his gourd was the offspring of unmitigated selfishness; so was his chagrin at the mercy of God in sparing the city. Having proclaimed that in forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, his credit as a prophet was concerned in having it come to pass; and, rather than that should suffer, he was willing to witness the death or captivity of two hundred and fifty thousand people. Is there any of this bad feeling in our hearts when we think and talk about certain nations which we regard as ripe for destruction?

But, as the people of Nineveh repented, the Lord permitted not the destroyer, whatever it might have been, to visit the city; but he prepared a worm to smite the gourd. It was not done to punish Jonah, but to teach him an impressive lesson: to teach him how frail and transient are the things of earth; to show him how selfish and cruel he was, and how merciful and gracious God was in sparing Nineveh; to wean him from the perishing

objects of earth and induce him to seek a better rest than he could find under the shade of his gourd. Are not we continually receiving similar practical lessons at the hand of our heavenly Guardian and Guide? Mercy spared Jonah as well as Nineveh, but smote the gourd of which he had made an idol.

We, too, are often "exceeding glad" of a wife, or child, or house, or office, or calling, or some object,—an object good in itself, as Jonah's gourd was, but upon which we bestow inordinate affection. Now, if we are so happy as to be of the number of those "whom the Lord loveth," he will be likely to send a worm to smite our gourd, whatever it may be. In no way does God more richly bless his people than in blasting their gourds. It was good in him to cause the gourd to spring up to shelter and comfort poor Jonah; but it was better, seeing that it had become a snare to him, to take it from him.

But Jonah's gourd may serve as an emblem not only of our possessions but of ourselves. "We all do fade as a leaf." "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men." But in this he is good, seeing he has prepared for us a better and more enduring inheritance. In man, and in

every thing pertaining to this life, our Maker has sown the seeds of dissolution. "Passing away" is inscribed upon all things with which we are surrounded. Man himself, the institutions and governments of men, all his earthly possessions, and the most perfect and stable of his works, are all like Jonah's gourd,—all tending to decay and death.

"The fell disease which must subdue at length
Grows with their growth and strengthens with their strength."

We think Jonah was a weak and foolish man to be so "exceeding glad of his gourd." But are we likely to find ourselves any wiser after faithfully searching our hearts? Are we not exceeding glad of our gourds too? We have many; every man has his own peculiar gourds; but there is one gourd of which we are exceeding glad as a whole people, and that is our structure of government. True, it is a good one,—the best, probably, that ever existed; but as it is the work of man, the product of human wisdom, we may assuredly infer that it, like all the works of men, is destined to perish, to pass away, to wither and die, as did Jonah's gourd. Jonah, doubtless, took good care of

his gourd while he had it; and he did right. So ought we to preserve with all practicable care the good system of government which God has given us; but we may rest assured that if we bestow upon it any of that regard and trust and confidence which are due only to him, he will prepare a worm to smite it, if indeed that worm be not already gnawing at its heart.

Spiritual Stores.

We cannot all become rich in a worldly sense. Many seek to become so, but are not able. It is not so with regard to spiritual riches. Here, whosoever will may become rich by taking of the water of life freely. "Let him that hath no money come and buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

Come where? Where is this wine and milk,—this water of life? Ah, we all need the admonition that Paul gave to the Romans:—"*Say not, Who will ascend up to heaven —that is to bring Christ down from above?* . . . .

but . . . the word is nigh thee, EVEN IN THY MOUTH AND IN THY HEART." Nothing is nearer, nothing more accessible, than this rich supply so freely offered. It is not away up in heaven, beyond our reach; it is not afar off, in some vague, dreamy region, of which we can form no definite conception; but in our hands,—in that blessed book whose treasures of wisdom and grace are perfectly inexhaustible.

Now, if we only look at a richly-spread table, it will not satisfy our hunger; nor will the mere report of wealth make us rich: so the mere reading of the Scriptures will never satisfy our spiritual wants. We must appropriate them in humble, childlike faith. The bare knowledge that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life," will do us no good unless we comply with the condition. The affecting narrative of blind Bartimeus will profit us nothing unless it causes us, as poor, blind creatures, to run to the same Saviour with the same cry. What benefit is it to me to know that Jehovah was David's Shepherd? but let me be able to adopt David's language, and then I too am placed beyond the reach

of want, or fear, or any evil. I too may look forward to a comfortable life and happy immortality. When I read the gracious words, "I am the Lord thy God," and can feel that he is speaking to me, then I drink of the water of life freely.

How rich, how blessed, is he whose memory is well stored with the words of eternal truth! It is a treasury from which he can draw in every time of need. While engaged in the duties of his calling, they will be floating through his mind, exerting a sanctifying influence, even when he is almost unconscious of it. They will enable him to resist temptation, to bear up under the trials of life, and in his most sequestered hours they will be with him, as friends and companions, to give form and expression to his holiest thoughts.

We think in language; but, unless the words of inspiration come to our aid, how cold, feeble, confused, and indefinite are our spiritual meditations! Well, then, if the words of God are not in our memories, how can we meditate? Nay, how can even the Holy Spirit operate upon our souls? The Saviour says, "My words, they are spirit and they are life." And again: "He [the Com-

forter] will take of mine and show them unto you;" but where shall he get them if they are not read or not treasured up in the mind? Here, then, we are to come. Here are the wine and milk. Here is that which will make your soul delight itself in fatness. These are the words of God, upon which the soul feeds, as the body feeds upon bread. This is the great storehouse whence we must draw our supplies. It is not enough that we look in and admire its fulness. We must draw upon it for ourselves,—continually, diligently, eagerly. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, we must *carry the roll in our bosom*, so as to have it always near, always ready.

England and Rome.

The devout and thoughtful student of the history of England,—I do not mean the history of her diplomacy, her wars, and her conquests, but of her progress from the darkness of heathenism and the rudeness of barbarism to her present high position in every

thing that can exalt a nation,—while he traces the rise and progress of religion, the struggles of light with darkness, of truth with error, of liberty with despotism, will be vividly reminded of the language addressed by Jesus Christ to the church at Philadelphia: —"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, *and no man can shut it;* for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. . . . Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

Before Christianity became corrupt by alliance with the kingdoms of this world, a few simple-minded disciples, principally from Asia Minor, carried the glad tidings of salvation through a crucified Redeemer to the shores of Britain. The seed fell into good soil, grew, and bore fruit. This was at the time when the island was wholly occupied by the Britons, except the mountainous region in the north and west of Scotland. Christianity prevailed extensively among them; but it was a Christianity over which the Bishop of Rome neither sought nor claimed

any authority; nor did it emanate from Rome. Indeed, Christianity was firmly established in Britain long before the time of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor of Rome, and long before the Bishop of Rome was acknowledged as head of the universal Church. In the second century, *Llerwig*, (called by Latin historians *Lucius*,) King of the Britons, embraced the gospel. The Venerable Bede informs us that after the death of Llerwig, A.D. 181, "the Britons preserved the faith which they had received whole and inviolate, in a quiet and peaceable manner, until the reign of Diocletian." In the persecutions under that cruel pagan emperor the Britons suffered in common with other Christians. At the Council of Nice, A.D. 325, there were three British pastors present. We see, therefore, that Britain was ruled by a Christian sovereign at least one hundred and fifty years before the accession of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, to the throne of the Cæsars.

The Britons were not a warlike people, and of course they were an easy prey to the predatory tribes of Picts and Scots who occupied the mountainous parts of Scotland, and from whose incursions they suffered greatly.

On the other hand, the Saxons, a pagan race who occupied the opposite coast of what is now the German Ocean, were trained to war and conquest. At the entreaty of the Britons, Hengist and Horsa, two Saxon chieftains, who claimed to be descended from Woden, their god, with sixteen hundred followers, landed on the island of Thanet in 449 or 450, and immediately marched against the Picts and Scots, over whom they gained an easy victory. This done, they showed no disposition to quit Britain, but, on the contrary, began to exercise authority over the people, and were not long in finding cause of quarrel with them. Hostilities soon followed; many skirmishes and battles were fought; but, the Saxons being frequently reinforced by their countrymen from the continent, the Britons were ultimately not only vanquished but partially exterminated, and the wretched remnant were obliged to flee for refuge, some to Brittany, on the northwest coast of France, and some to the mountains of Wales, where their descendants, the Welsh, have ever since remained, and are this day the only remnant of the aborigines of Britain.

The fury of the Saxon conquerors was especially directed against the Christian in-

habitants, churches, and institutions of Britain, and for a century and a half the worshippers of Woden triumphed over the disciples of Christ. Their churches were demolished, their worship forbidden, and themselves either slain, driven into exile, or reduced to servitude.

But an eminent British Christian, named Succat, now better known as Saint Patrick, had, some fifty or sixty years previous to the landing of the Saxons, preached the gospel with great success among the pagan inhabitants of Ireland. Many churches were founded in that island, learning flourished, and, while their brethren of Britain were suffering the fiercest persecution at the hands of their Saxon conquerors, the Christians of Ireland were enjoying a good degree of prosperity and repose. A band of devoted men from Ireland, headed by Columbo, founded a college and missionary station on a small barren island on the western coast of Scotland, called Iona. The prime object of Columbo and his associates was the conversion of the Saxons to Christianity. In this they had some success; but, as these proud conquerors regarded the Britons as slaves, they disdained to submit to them or their disciples

as teachers. But while the great ones of the nation rejected the gospel at the lips of the humble followers of Jesus, the poor and the lowly heard them gladly. The pure word of God was preached; and, although the Saxons as a people retained their pagan character and adhered to their pagan rites, there were many who believed and embraced the truth. The grain of mustard-seed was planted in Saxon soil; and the attentive student of history can trace its growth from generation to generation, amid darkness and storms and in spite of all the enemies which Rome either sent or raised up to crush it out; for there never was a time when the people of England did not resist and struggle against the power of Rome.

Meeting, however, with less success among the Saxons than they had hoped for, they directed their missionary efforts elsewhere; and accordingly we find the missionaries of Iona traversing Gaul, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, and even Italy. He only who sees the end from the beginning knows what lasting benefits flowed from the labours of these humble heralds of the gospel in its almost primitive simplicity and purity. For a thousand dark and stormy years we find

some faithful witnesses in all those countries; and then came the grand harvest of the Reformation. Like good plants springing up in the midst of thorns, the growth was feeble and the fruit scanty; yet, having an immortal and imperishable root, the truth then sown, both in Britain and on the continent, survived the long dark night of the Middle Ages.

These events occurred during the Heptarchy, while England was divided into seven Saxon kingdoms,—to wit: Kent, Northumberland, East Anglia, Mercia, Essex, Sussex, and Wessex. While the independent church of Iona was struggling against Saxon idolatry in the northwest, Rome entered the country on the southeast, in the person of Augustine,* a Roman monk. A way had been opened for this mission by the marriage of Ethelbert,

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* The true name of this man was *Austin*, although most historians call him Augustine. Some have erroneously confounded him with the famous theologian of that name, whose works hold so high a place among those of the "fathers," and who was, up to the time of his death, Bishop of Hippo. He died A.D. 430, one hundred and seventy years before Austin, the Roman monk,—or Augustine, as he is called,—landed upon the shores of Britain.

King of Kent, to Bertha, only daughter of the King of Paris, a zealous Papist, one ready and eager to second the most ambitious designs of Rome. Augustine was kindly received by Ethelbert, and the work of *conversion* went on with unprecedented rapidity, Augustine having baptized as many as ten thousand Saxon pagans in a single day. He was soon created Archbishop of Canterbury, and, having a hierarchy of twelve bishops under his control, he was placed over not only the Saxons but the free Britons, and laboured assiduously to bring the entire community under the rule of the Bishop of Rome.

At this time a numerous Christian society existed at Bangor, in North Wales, which had never acknowledged the authority of Rome. Dionoth, the venerable president of this society, when required by Augustine to acknowledge the authority of the Bishop of Rome, meekly replied, "We desire to love all men; and what we do for you we will do for him also whom you call Pope. But he is not entitled to call himself the *father of fathers;* and the only submission we can render him is that which we owe to every Christian." But love was lightly esteemed by Rome where submission was withheld. Subse-

quently an assembly of British and Saxon bishops was held. Augustine again summoned Dionoth to acknowledge the authority of Rome, but all to no purpose. The Scotch were particularly inflexible, and carried their opposition so far as to refuse to eat at the same table with those who acknowledged the authority of Rome. Three times did Augustine approach them, and was as often repulsed; and at the last conference he closed, as we are told by the Venerable Bede, by uttering these ominous words:—"If you will not receive brethren who bring you peace, you shall receive enemies who will bring you war. If you will not unite with us in showing the Saxons the way of life, you shall receive from them the stroke of death." Soon was the savage prophecy fulfilled; for not long afterwards thousands of unarmed British Christians were put to the sword by order of Edelfrid, King of Northumberland. Pressed on all sides by argument, entreaty, and force, reduced by the sword of the Saxons and bewildered by the sophisms of Romish priests, the firmness of these early Christians began to give way, and finally the calm, pure light which for several centuries had shone from the rocks of Iona died out. It died out

as a separate and independent organization; but it never died out of the hearts of the Lord's "hidden ones," even to this day.

But the work of Augustine and his associates in converting the Saxons was so superficial, so unreal, that thousands of them relapsed into their original heathenism, some of the kings among the rest. Northumberland, which had never fully submitted to Rome, became thoroughly heathen during the reign of Edelfrid; and he it was who cruelly murdered the unarmed British Christians. Oswald, his son, spent his youth in Scotland, where he embraced the doctrines of Iona, and after the death of his father he conceived the idea of leading his subjects to Jesus Christ. After putting himself in possession of the throne, he accompanied Aidan, a meek and devoted missionary from Iona, and interpreted his gentle discourses to the people. Through his instrumentality, much good seed was sown in the Saxon mind before the priests of Rome had access to them at all. This good prince died fighting against Penda, King of Mercia.*

The death of Oswald, however, did not in-

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* D'Aubigné's Hist. Ref. vol. 5.

terrupt the labours of the missionaries. They laboured on, and that important division of England was in a good degree converted to Christ before the missionaries of Rome had entered the field. And, although these Christians ultimately acknowledged the authority of the Pope, they never wholly lost the precious truths thus early sown in their minds. Oswald died on the 5th of August, 642.

In the year 827, the Heptarchy, which had continued almost four hundred years, came to an end by the fusion of the seven kingdoms into one under Egbert, King of Wessex. This consolidation of power gave Rome great advantages over the independent churches of Northumberland and elsewhere, and for several centuries there was no open or organized resistance made against the authority of the Pope, although at no time did the people of England cease in their resistance to the encroachments of the priesthood.

Alfred the Great ascended the throne in 871. During the first twenty years of his reign he was engaged in a desperate struggle with numerous hordes of piratical Danes, who from time to time landed on the shores of England and almost ruined the country with their pillage and wanton devastation.

Alfred finally succeeded in conquering them; and, that done, he directed his fine genius to the promotion of learning, the encouragement of the useful arts, and the formation of legal and municipal institutions. In the settlement of the more important cases between parties, the method of decision is worthy of special notice. Twelve freeholders were chosen, who, having sworn, together with the presiding magistrate, to administer impartial justice, proceeded to the examination of the cause submitted to their jurisdiction. Here we see the origin of the *Trial by Jury*, that great palladium of the rights of freemen. He divided the kingdom into counties, and established courts of justice in each. He formed a body of written laws, which is justly deemed the basis of English jurisprudence, and the origin of what is denominated the *Common Law*.

So deplorable was the state of learning at that day that Alfred was unable to find a single person south of the Thames, either clerical or lay, who was able to translate the Latin church-service. But he founded schools and colleges, and before the close of his reign great improvements in learning had taken place. At that day, and for nearly a century

afterwards, the ecclesiastics were for the most part, although blind leaders of the blind, harmless beings. They married and lived in general society, as Protestant clergymen do at present; and, although monasteries were numerous, the monks were not, as at present, isolated from the society of their fellow-men, but married, reared families, and generally pursued some honest calling for a livelihood. Nothing was known then of the celibacy of the clergy, nothing of purgatory or auricular confession, nothing even of transubstantiation as a distinct dogma. Christianity, it is true, had degenerated into a mere system of rites and ceremonies, and the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free had to a great degree been laid at the feet of the Bishop of Rome. The doctrine of justification by faith was obscured and wellnigh lost, and the rosary and the liturgy had supplanted the word of God. Still, even then there were many who clung to the apostles' doctrine as it had been taught in Iona, and who shone as lights in the world. Alfred himself, although he never protested, was in every essential attribute of his character a Protestant. Rome did not pretend to control his administration, and he made no war on Rome. He was

anxious to give his subjects the Holy Scriptures in their own language; and, conscious of being the best scholar of his day, he undertook the great task himself, and died while translating the Psalms of David.

Although we may class Alfred among Catholics, as Catholicism existed in those days, yet God seems to have raised him up and endowed him with extraordinary talents and virtues, that he might embody in organic and practical form those imperishable principles of administration and jurisprudence which have ever been the bulwark of English liberty, and by means of which the people of that country have been able at all times to preserve some degree of personal independence. These were the weapons with which they resisted the encroachments of the Roman hierarchy, and to the triumph of which is to be attributed the freedom of the Anglo-Saxon branch of the human family; while for want of them Spain, Portugal, Italy, and even France, have sunk into helpless and unresisting slavery to the tyranny of Rome.

Class him as we may, as an Ionian or a Catholic, certain it is that no man ever trod the soil of Britain to whom we are so much indebted for the development and conserva-

tion of the principles of liberty as to Alfred. Three hundred years afterwards, the barons of Runnymede did nothing more than wrest from King John an acknowledgment of the principles, rights, and institutions founded and maintained by him. The *Magna Charta* was only a reassertion of those principles, more definitely set forth, perhaps, but not more pure. For this act those barons were excommunicated by Innocent III., the then reigning pontiff, who, acting upon the policy introduced by Pope Gregory VII., (Hildebrand,) claimed and exercised the right of directing the domestic polity of all the states of Christendom. Having first reduced King John to the condition of a vassal to himself, Innocent assumed the guardianship of his kingly prerogatives as against his subjects; and hence the thunders of the Vatican against the authors of the Great Charter, that bulwark of the liberties of Englishmen, which neither regal nor ecclesiastical power has ever been able to overthrow. Now, had Alfred lived during the pontificate of Hildebrand or his successors, he would doubtless have been resisted in his policy; but, fortunately for the world, he founded the institutions of freedom and built up its defences

before that evil day of sacerdotal domination.

But although the edict of excommunication cost those barons the loss of their property, rendered them outlaws, and exposed them to danger and death, they cared not for these things, but stood firm; for both God and the people were with them. It is a striking fact that the very time when the crown of England touched the lowest point of degradation and spiritual vassalage was the time the British Constitution had its birth. We now return.

About fifty years after the death of Alfred, Eldred ascended the throne of England. He seems to have been a weak and superstitious prince, who implicitly surrendered his conscience to Dunstan, Abbot of Glastonbury, a man of unbounded ambition and insolence, but who managed to preserve such a semblance of sanctity that Rome subsequently enrolled him among her saints as Saint Dunstan. Until his day priests and monks were permitted to marry, and the latter were at liberty to quit their convents at pleasure. But during this reign, and under the auspices of Dunstan, a new order of monks were introduced into England from Italy. These were

the Benedictines, who eschewed marriage as sinful, secluded themselves entirely from the world, renounced all claim to liberty, and professed at once the most inviolable chastity and the most unreserved obedience to their ecclesiastical superiors. Now for the first time we see the "mystery of iniquity" fully developed and the distinguishing characteristics of full-grown Popery standing out in bold relief. The first thing these janizaries of the Church did was to commence a war upon the married clergy, and compel them either to give up their wives or incur censure and disgrace. The vilest and most opprobrious epithets were freely bestowed upon those who resisted this tyrannical requirement; and between a weak monarch and an ignorant people, both of whom were easily persuaded of the superior sanctity of the new order, the old order was sorely pressed; and after a vigorous resistance, which continued during this and the succeeding reign, they became extinct through death or submission.

The power of the clergy being thus strengthened, and they separated from the people in office, in domestic condition, in sympathy and interest, Rome began in earnest the work of subjugating England,

and for a long time carried things with a high hand. It was about this time that she began the policy of possessing herself of the real estate of the realm. This was held under a tenure called *mortmain*. Under the law of *mortmain*, estates could be conveyed to the head of a religious house and his successors; but he or they had no power to alienate this property or part with it in any way. It thus became the perpetual inheritance of the Church. It is easy to imagine the tremendous power that would in process of time grow up under such a practice; and if we wish to see its practical effects upon a nation we have only to turn our eyes to Spain or Mexico. The doctrine of purgatory, combined with the law of mortmain, brought many a fine estate to the Church. A dying man, terrified at the prospect of working out a purgation of the sins of his life in that awful place, and being told by his confessor that a rich legacy to the Church would be an act so meritorious that it would be sufficient to cancel the sins of a whole life and fit him at once for entering heaven, would gladly close with the offer, and convey his estate, or at least a part of it, to *holy uses*. For a time the practice prevailed to such an extent in England that the people

became alarmed; for they had sagacity enough to perceive that the estates of the Church and the arrogance of the ecclesiastics grew in exact proportion. It would be interesting, if time permitted, to trace the long and varying struggle between the Parliament and the Church on this subject, which continued from the tenth to the sixteenth century. Law after law was enacted to regulate, check, or abolish the practice; but, no matter how ingeniously and carefully the laws were framed, the cunning of the ecclesiastics always managed to get round them in some way; and it was not until the Reformation that the practice was finally abolished. In nothing is that unconquerable spirit of liberty which began in Iona, or rather on Calvary, and which was embodied by Alfred into practical law, more strikingly exemplified than in the long and gallant struggle of the English people against this infamous policy.

The spirit of Christ is the spirit of liberty; and where we find the principles of just laws and of resistance to tyranny, there may we expect to find true Christianity; and although it was only at intervals, and at periods of strong excitement, that these scintillations of the true spirit of the gospel broke out with

sufficient vividness to reach down through centuries to our day, yet—as an American poet has eloquently expressed a similar thought,—

"The rockets' red glare, and bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof, *through the night*, that our flag was still there"—

we know, by what has reached us, that the flag of true Christian freedom was still floating there; and hence we find that whenever the heavy pressure of sacerdotal and kingly tyranny was in the slightest degree removed, the pure light of gospel truth and Christian liberty burst forth. In 1235, Robert Grostete, Bishop of Lincoln, openly disobeyed the Pope, and placed the authority of the Scriptures above that of the Church, the very thing that Luther did three hundred years afterwards. A century later, Bradwardine taught doctrines identical with those taught long afterwards by Calvin, and deeply lamented that a religion of externals had been substituted for inward Christianity. Edward III., who then reigned, procured the passage of a law which for the time-being secured the independence of the English Church. A quarter of a century after the death of Bradwardine, Wick-

liffe appeared, and not only preached the pure word of God, but actually gave to the people of England that word written in their own language. Although Wickliffe preceded Luther and his cotemporary Reformers one hundred and fifty years, yet his work may justly be regarded as the dawn of the Reformation. From that time until Popery was overthrown there was a strong party in England who, through good and through evil report, maintained the authority of the Scriptures and repudiated that of the Pope.

Our object has been to show that all through the Dark Ages there existed among the people of England an irrepressible spirit of resistance to the corruptions and tyranny of the Romish Church. We have traced it from its origin in the primitive Church, down through British and Saxon Christians, to the time when Rome put forth her most audacious pretensions. We have seen it resisting and protesting against the errors and encroachments of Rome, even before God by his providence had said, "Come out of her, my people, and be not partakers of her sins;" and in all that long and gloomy period we see light struggling with darkness, truth with error, health with disease, and freedom with oppres-

sion; and finally the struggle terminated in the triumph of light and truth and liberty. In some of those dark periods some English Elijah might have uttered the complaint, "They have thrown down thine altars, and killed thy prophets with the sword, and I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away;" but, could such a one have had a direct response from Heaven, doubtless it would have been in such cheering language as saluted the ear of the desponding prophet:—"I have left me seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Having traced the subject thus far, we close; for to treat of the Reformation would be to enter upon a different subject.

National Life and Growth.

"WHERE the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty," are the words of divinely-inspired truth; and where liberty is there is progress. They are inseparable. The one is a concomitant of the other.

Liberty must have its roots in the souls of

the people; and if it be there it will certainly manifest itself in the administration of their government, be its form what it may. "*Constitutions are not made: they grow,*" said an eminent Englishman; and seldom has a more profound aphorism been uttered.

Men may talk as they please about this or that epoch, or revolution, or hero, or patriot; still, the thoughtful student of history can trace the spirit and progress of true liberty beyond them. Its origin no man nor people may claim. He will trace it back to Him whose high commission it was to give deliverance to the captive, and to that hour when he, with his expiring breath, exclaimed "It is finished!" and it will be felt that the great command first uttered at the grave in Bethany, "LOOSE HIM AND LET HIM GO," has no private or contracted interpretation, but that it is still reverberating throughout the world with unabated potency, and will continue to operate until every yoke is broken from the minds and bodies of men.

Under the lead of the Captain of his salvation, man started upon a career of steady and resistless advancement. With a mind disenthralled and placed under an unerring guide, the light of truth shining upon his

path, he went forward, stumbling and wandering at times, but still onwards and upwards. Slowly he emerged from the dark region through which he had so long wandered; and with ever-increasing power he overcame, and is still overcoming, the mighty obstacles that did lie, and are yet lying, in his path.

Faith, which is the grand central principle in Religion, is also the prime element in human progress. If we believe in God and intelligently trust him, we will also believe and trust in man. Here is the secret and cement of brotherhood. If we trust in man we cannot but love him; and if we love him we will unite with him in our endeavours to promote our common good. This principle manifests itself in social life, in morals, in politics, in opposition to common evils and dangers, and in the accomplishment of objects of common benefit. Thus may we trace the construction of a bridge, a railroad, or a telegraph-line back to that heaven-implanted principle which unites man to his Maker.

This deep, sacred, beautiful principle of life and energy has led to results at which even the actors themselves are amazed. Single, isolated, unaided, distrusting others

and others distrusting them, men are almost powerless; but let them combine their energies, and nothing feasible is too hard for them. Look at our railroad and telegraph systems and a thousand other material objects of public utility.* Look at our institutions of learning, of benevolence, and of jurisprudence. Look at our matchless structure of government, around which are set our State and municipal institutions, all moving in freedom, harmony, and order. Whence came these things? Truly, they are not the creatures of a day nor of a generation. They were not made: THEY GREW. They are part of the fruit of that Tree "the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations."

Look again at our systems of public

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* At the very time when this little work was being put into stereotype, the Atlantic Telegraph cable, extending from Valentia Bay, on the west coast of Ireland, to Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, was successfully laid, after two failures. Universal rejoicing on both sides of the Atlantic followed this mightiest achievement of science. The heart of the Christian world responded thrillingly to the first message transmitted across the great deep:—"*Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men.*"

schools, reared and sustained by the fostering hand of the State. Who does not see in this beautiful thing a partial fulfilment at least of that prediction of the prophet which speaks of kings becoming "nursing fathers"? This, too, is but another development of the great principle of which we are speaking, and is a tributary of immeasurable volume and power to the great river of human progress.

The progress of population in our day is beyond all former example; and this also is only found conjoined with intelligent Christian freedom. China is stationary, perhaps retrograding; so are India and Africa; and France, Austria, Spain, Italy, and the South American States are advancing very slowly indeed, if at all. But England, which in the first year of the present century had a population of 8,872,980, the slow accumulation of two thousand years, and which was then regarded as over-crowded, had in 1831 a population of 13,894,569; and in 1851 it had nearly doubled what it was at the beginning of the century, being 16,734,647. Here we see that England gained as largely in population during the first half-century of well-developed and confirmed freedom as she had

done during a period of forty times that duration of comparative darkness, despotism, and struggle. This progress in population is really more wonderful than that of the United States, when we remember that England was at the beginning of that half-century old and densely populated, and that in those fifty years she sent out to every quarter of the globe millions of emigrants and colonists; while the United States had a vast, unpeopled territory, and received during the same period millions of immigrants from the Old World.

This marvellous increase in population there, here, and in every land where man is free, is the result of those material comforts and moral and social blessings which emancipated genius and Christian fraternity are sure to create.

That knowledge is power, is an aphorism universally accepted; but faith, taken in the broadest and truest sense of the term, is a still greater power. It is the root of knowledge; it is the bond of society; it links the finite to the infinite, and literally removes mountains. Without it there can be no free government, no commerce, properly so called, no combinations for the accomplishment of

grand and beneficent enterprises, whether political, religious, benevolent, scientific, or material.

An intelligent gentleman, who had spent some time in Mexico, was speaking one evening of the condition of the people of that country,—of the almost total absence of public spirit and improvement, and of the difficulties attending commercial transactions. "The whole trouble," said he, emphatically, "is traceable to the fact that *they have no faith.* They don't know what it is. One merchant purchases of another merchant ten thousand dollars' worth of some commodity; but, instead of a note, a check, or a bill, a score of bare-backed, bare-legged leperos are seen moving in Indian file along the streets, each carrying a bag of dollars, and all guarded and watched by several policemen or soldiers." Who can dispute the conclusion to which he came? They have plenty of credulity, it is true, but no faith; and, having no faith, they have no freedom, no peace, no security, no prosperity, and they make no progress.

Among no people, past or present, is the opposite character so strongly exemplified as among those of the United States, and particularly those of New England; and every-

where we witness the magnificent achievements of combined energy. Do men wish to make money? They unite their capital and their skill; and they do so because they have confidence in each other, and because they know that they can better advance their separate individual interests in that way than by operating alone. Do they desire to advance the growth and prosperity of their city, town, or neighbourhood? With a forecast as sagacious as it is generous, they take such measures as they deem necessary, and freely contribute of their wealth to carry out the enterprise. Do they wish to provide for the relief of the afflicted? A hospital or an asylum rises at the bidding of a generous combination. Are they anxious to secure the blessings of education? A union of hearts, hands, and purses soon brings the college and the school-house into existence and maintains them in their beneficent work. And the church, the Sunday-school, the public library, and kindred institutions, all owe their existence to the same great principle.

Here is the grand secret of our unparalleled progress as a people. Slowly and painfully at first the population spread from valley to

valley, each man struggling for himself,—aided greatly, it is true, by mutual kindness; but it was not until within a few years that the great principle of solid, efficient, well-organized combination became general and made the settlement and subjugation of our Western wilderness so different from what it had been half a century before. Compare the progress of the first settlers of Kentucky and Ohio with that of those of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota. In the case of the last each man acts for himself as much as did the former; but the principle which made kind neighbours of the first, and established only too extensively the relations of debtor and creditor among them, has taken a different phase, and has made the last not only kind and confiding friends, but co-workers for their mutual and general benefit. Like every good and living principle, it is GROWING, developing, maturing, and will continue to do so until the whole earth shall be replenished, subdued, and become the abode of a band of brethren.

Whenever a great and good principle is unfolding itself, minds more ardent and impetuous than wise catch the idea and run it to excess. Hence the mad schemes, with which the world rung a few years ago, of

fraternal associations, communities of goods, &c. &c., some of which aimed at an entire reconstruction of society. But in real progress there are no novelties, no violence, no sudden changes. Each successive development is the natural, almost necessary, product of that which preceded it, and is manifested as gradually and noiselessly as the opening of the leaves and blossoms of a tree. Like its Author, this great principle does not strive nor cry, neither does it lift up its voice in the streets. It has its primitive seat in the individual soul; that in turn operates upon the outward character of the man; the influence of the regenerated man acts upon those around him; the leaven reaches and changes particle after particle of the great mass; and so the power of the living principle extends and subdues; thus does it "go forth conquering and to conquer," until all things are brought under its control.

But, while we may in humble gratitude and without arrogance felicitate ourselves upon the progress we have made, and are yet making, towards that unreached and as yet unimagined perfection of moral, social, and material well-being to which our hopes and aspirations tend, let us remember that the

seed-time is here yet, not the harvest; that there is much ground yet to be possessed; that thorns and briers cover the moral soil even of our own country. We must work,—work in patience and in faith. The truth which can alone make free must be implanted in the great heart of the nation. We must dig deep, until we reach that rock upon which the wise man builds his house, and against which the winds, the rains, and the floods beat in vain. Nothing short of this can afford assurance of enduring safety and progress to this or any other nation. Without it we may indeed come to great power and spread ourselves like a green bay-tree; but soon the historian would be called upon to record the fact that "he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

The triumphs of party, however important for the moment, have but slight abiding influence upon the great ultimate destiny of a nation. It may be but a wave rolling across the surface of a tideless lake. The waters may for a moment be lifted up, but only to roll back to where they were before.

Popular agitations are wholesome, even indispensable. The plough agitates the soil,

and fits it for the reception of good seed; but if we rest there—if we only plough the field—a ranker and fouler crop of weeds will be our only reward. But the Great Husbandman, in his good providence, has made his own people seedsmen, not ploughmen. Their business is to watch and take advantage of whatever may move and lay open the popular mind, and drop in the appropriate seed, leaving to HIM who giveth the increase the care and nourishment of it after it has been lodged there.

It is, however, in the education of the young—in giving a right direction to the tender and flexible shoot—that we may most rationally hope to maintain in purity and vigour those great principles of which we are speaking, and which have carried us thus far, and which are able to bear us onwards and upwards indefinitely. It is a work of faith and patience to sow seed of any kind, whether moral or material. The words or the grains, as they leave our lips or our hands, sink out of view. They seem to be thrown away; for we perceive no immediate results. But there is no other way. We must sow if we would hope to reap.

Liberty is essential to the life and growth

of a nation; but let us ever bear in mind that there is no such thing as absolute freedom. *Man must have a master.* There is One, and only one, whose service is perfect freedom. As Christians we freely acknowledge his authority; but we are prone to forget him in the conduct of our politics. Herein lies our danger; and to this, more than to any thing else, may we attribute the abuses and corruptions now so prevalent and so alarming. The French people in 1789–93 aimed at absolute freedom; but they soon discovered that it would not do. Unrestrained licentiousness, terrific commotions, and an era of blood and terror very soon compelled them to seek what security and repose they could find under the heavy yoke of an imperial master. Nothing in all history is more suggestive than this fact.

The authority of the King of kings is absolute and cannot be evaded. Nations and individuals are equally amenable. We may as well think to escape from his presence as from his law. It binds the voter at the ballot-box as closely and as firmly as it does the Christian in the house of prayer. But there is no thraldom in this subjection; for the more perfect our obedience the greater is our freedom.

Every thing, indeed, is under law, and the law of every thing is adapted to its nature. The vapour that rises, the rain that descends, the stream that flows, the blood that circulates, the food that assimilates, the plant that grows, the animal that plays the part assigned to it, and the man who reverences and adores his God and discharges his duty to his fellows,—all, all act in obedience to law; AND THAT OBEDIENCE IS PROGRESS.

The March of Empire.

It may, to some readers, sound like a novel and startling proposition, that God has ever given to every people as much freedom as they were able to bear; but the student of history will, upon careful examination, be constrained to admit its truth. To say that he has given to every *man* as much as he could bear would be absurd and untrue; but nations are dealt with in their aggregate, not their individual, capacity.

The mere form of government is of much less importance than men generally suppose;

for the form will soon adapt itself to the character of the people. As they advance in knowledge and in fitness for self-government, the government will advance with them. Great Britain furnishes a notable example of this. These changes rarely require violence. Indeed, violence always impedes true progress.

What we term the American Revolution was, in the proper sense of the word, no revolution at all. It had reference not to internal principles and polity, but to outward relations. The principles of liberty were as fully developed in the British colonies as they were after those colonies had become independent States. It was impossible that the men of those colonies could be enslaved or long submit to arbitrary imposition. As they grew strong, the jealousy of a weak and short-sighted administration dictated a change of policy towards them, and that new and erroneous policy dictated on their part a declaration of independence. The war which ensued was a war of dismemberment,—a war of independence. It was successful; and nothing remained at its close for the people to do except to arrange their outward structures of government to suit their altered circum-

stances. They were now independent; they were free before. The spirit and even the letter of their constitutions had long since grown to full maturity. The alterations which they underwent in form did not change the substance. The freedom which existed in these colonies was real, substantial, indestructible, for it was founded upon the Bible and developed itself in a system of just and wholesome laws. Under such a state of things, progress was an inevitable consequence.

Occupy, *multiply*, *replenish*, *subdue*, express the instincts and the history of man in his best earthly estate, when free from inherent debasement and outward thraldom; and nothing in the annals of mankind is more wonderful than the progress of settlement on this continent, especially in our own country; and, like all real progress, it advanced silently, steadily, irresistibly. It began upon the first planting of colonies of Christian men on the Atlantic border. Slowly, painfully, and perilously the settlements began to push westward. More than a century elapsed before the Alleghanies were surmounted; being less than two miles a year. Nearly two centuries passed before there was any thing that could be called internal commerce. Poor, struggling with

difficulties, exposed to both dangers and privations, and destitute of most of the comforts and advantages of civilization, the advancing tide of population crept onwards, but acquired new force at every step. In time, large tracts of the wilderness were converted into fruitful fields; wealth accumulated; science and the spirit of enterprise grew rapidly, until the steamboat, and finally the railroad-car, superseded the pack-horse; and now the full tide of civilization pours onward at once, and we can hardly say that there are any pioneers. The astonished red man sees splendid cities rise in the midst of his hunting-grounds before he has time to get away. But slow as was this progress at first, compared with what we now see, it was real, and could not fail of success; for the Bible, the school-master, and the minister of the gospel were ever in the van. How unlike is this quiet, smooth, and ever-increasing stream to the roaring, turbid, desolating floods which rolled over Europe in the Middle Ages!

And to what will it lead, and where will it stop? In a few years, as things are progressing, the valleys of the Upper Mississippi, the Red River of the North, and the Missouri will be occupied. The Rocky Mountains

will hardly be felt as a barrier to the onward spread of the living tide; and, that passed, the extensive territories on the Pacific slope will fill up with a rapidity not less than that which marked the progress of Wisconsin and Iowa. Opulent cities will continue to spring into existence as if by magic, as many have already done.

A fine region lies north of our national boundary, between Lake Winnepeg and the Rocky Mountains, which can only be advantageously reached through our territory, and which is sure to be connected with it by social and commercial ties so strong as to render its people and our people one in spite of governmental boundaries fixed by the diplomatists of preceding generations. They will "flow together," and no shock of violent dismemberment will ever be felt on either side. The day for that kind of coerced fealty is past among free people, never to return. While it is true that the Queen of Great Britain has no more loyal subjects in her wide dominions than the people of Canada, it is equally true that the mutual ties of sympathy and interest between them and the people of the United States are growing stronger every day. Speaking the same language, being equally

free, and being homogeneous in faith and social habits, why should it not be so? Although the one may live under a monarchy and the other be republican, they are still becoming more and more one people, and are in all essential matters as closely allied as are those of New York and Pennsylvania. The late joint act of the two Governments, establishing reciprocal free trade, is a significant index of the tendency of things.

There is something very remarkable in the pressure of American population and energy westward. It has its mission, and it is a great one. Already they have reached the shores of the Pacific; and it will not be long before the central regions of the continent will be filled with people and traversed by railroads and telegraph-lines. What then? Will that ocean stop the human tide? By no means. The same energy, the same ambition and bold spirit of adventure, will carry it to Asia, and the valleys of the Amoor and other great rivers of that continent will be vocal with the same language and resound with the clangor of the same machinery that will enliven those of the Missouri and the Columbia. It will not go there to conquer, dispossess, or enslave, but to emancipate,

to teach, to enlighten, and to bless; and, as this process goes on, those hoary and stupid despotisms which have long made China and Japan great prison-houses will melt away as the fetters of winter melt away under the genial rays of the vernal sun. Thus, art and true science, conjoined with commerce, with their improving and rejuvenating influence, will open the way for Truth, Religion, Liberty, and Law.

"Westward the star of empire takes its way," said Bishop Berkeley, more than a century ago; and every year is making the truth of that bold poetic declaration more apparent and more surprising. A century ago, the minds of men of strong faith fixed upon the then far-distant Mississippi as the limit of that western march of empire. Next the Rocky Mountains were the *ultima Thule* of ardent imaginations. Things progressed rapidly, and then the shores of the Pacific were fixed upon as the boundary of Time's last and noblest offspring. But we now see that the star of empire is not likely to quench its fires in the Pacific. Westward and still westward the great tide of human progress seems destined to roll on, until it makes the circuit of the globe, revivifying that which may live,

and burying or sweeping away that which is dead.

It matters not what may be the motive, the impelling principle, of those who lead in this great march. It may be cupidity, or ambition, or benevolence, or all of these. Be this as it may, the signs of the times plainly indicate already that the SUN which shall scatter the gross darkness that has for ages enshrouded Asia will arise, as does the natural sun, from the Pacific.

It has ever been so. From Asia, the primeval home of the race and the cradle of religion and science, did civilization creep slowly westward over Europe, but made no progress eastward. For a few centuries its march was arrested by the Atlantic, until at length it acquired the power and skill to overleap that barrier, when again it took up its triumphal march in America, with a power and celerity of movement never before known. Here, on this broad and magnificent continent, we have seen and felt its movements. It no longer creeps, like a feeble rivulet making its way through a morass, but rolls onward like a mighty river. It is a power guided and impelled by more than the wisdom and the strength of man; and if the

Atlantic could not arrest its march in the fifteenth century, while still in a state of comparative feebleness, how quickly will it overleap another ocean-barrier in the nineteenth!

The sun, bearing in his train light and life and joy and blessing, marches from east to west, as does true empire; while storms and tempests generally move in the opposite direction, as have the desolating footsteps of conquerors and oppressors. Alexander, the Cæsars, Great Britain, and France have all attempted to force the march of empire eastward; but the result in all cases was discomfiture and disaster. Those empires more resembled the blaze of the meteor, the flash of the lightning, than the light and the vivifying power of the sun. Contrast at this moment the movements going on in the valley of the Mississippi with those in the valley of the Ganges.

"The star of empire." What is empire? We have suffered our understandings to be warped by past and existing abuses on this point, until the word suggests to the mind the overgrown dominions of the Cæsars or the huge and beastly realm of the Czar. But God himself gave us the true idea of

empire when he said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, AND SUBDUE IT." This is what Bishop Berkeley means by the "star of empire;" and this is what the people of North America are now doing. This is empire in its true sense,—the dominion of man over nature, not man over man. This it is which carries with it individual, social, and national peace and prosperity. This it is which sets every man "under his own vine and fig-tree, with none to molest him or make him afraid." This is what constitutes the true glory and defence of a nation and brings the greatest good to the greatest number. It is the condition of things which God gives to those who fear him, and who make his law their highest, their best, their unalterable constitution.

God's Dwelling-Place.

THAT God is everywhere present is a truth which can be received by the believer and the unbeliever alike. Omnipresence is one of his essential attributes, and one which none but an atheist will deny. The Deist contemplates and, in some degree, adores him as the great Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe; and his view may be correct as far as it goes. He regards with admiration the evidences of wisdom and goodness which surround him on every side, and the contemplation often awakens within him such emotions as are expressed in the following opening lines of Thomson's "Hymn to the Seasons:"—

"These, as they change, ALMIGHTY FATHER! these
Are but the varied God. The rolling year
Is full of thee. Forth in the pleasing SPRING
Thy beauty walks, thy tenderness and love:
Wide flush the fields; the softening air is balm;
Echo the mountains round; the forest smiles;
And every sense and every heart is joy.

Then comes thy glory in the SUMMER months,
With light and heat refulgent. Then thy sun
Shoots full perfection through the swelling year;
And oft thy voice in dreadful thunder speaks;
And oft at dawn, deep noon, or falling eve,
By brooks and groves, in hollow whispering gales.
Thy bounty shines in AUTUMN unconfined,
And spreads a common feast for all that lives.
In WINTER, awful thou! with clouds and storms
Around thee thrown, tempest o'er tempest roll'd,
Majestic darkness! on the whirlwind's wing
Riding sublime, thou bidd'st the world adore,
And humblest Nature with thy northern blast."

This fine passage breathes only the language of Deism, or natural religion; but in saying this I am not finding fault with it. Would that such reflections were more common among Christians! for they expand the mind, purify the heart, and exalt the affections. David, in the 19th Psalm, shows us that he loved to contemplate the glory of God in the works of creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." But David, after expatiating in a few fervid strains upon the glories of "Nature," by an easy and beautiful transition proceeds to speak of the "Law of the Lord,"

—his revealed will,—and ascribes to that benefits and blessings which cannot be found among the glories of the visible heavens or in the beauties and utilities of earth. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple," is his opening language on this highest and most glorious branch of his subject; and he goes on until he exhausts both language and simile in his effort to express an adequate idea of the ineffable preciousness of that revelation which God has made in his written word. Let the proud Deist boast that he can offer to "the God of Nature" a more exalted worship than the Christian,—and I have given above as fine a sample of that kind of worship as there is to be found in the English language. But what is there in that to convert the soul, to make wise the simple, to rejoice the heart, to enlighten the eyes? What is there in that to show a sinful man how he may approach his most holy Maker? Dark indeed would his condition be were this all the religion to which man could attain. Poor, sinful, suffering man needs a clearer revelation, a more certain guide, and a surer word of promise than *he* is able to read in the book of Nature.

Greater and holier orders of being may see God with all-sufficient clearness in the glories of creation; but we cannot, because our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid his face from us; and we know not whether he regards us in mercy or in wrath, until a clearer and better revelation than Nature affords assures us that he is merciful, and that he has found a way in which he can be just and yet justify the sinner that believes in Jesus.

But where is God? Where is his dwelling-place? Nature cannot tell us; for the God of Nature is "a God that hideth himself." Is it answered that both Nature and Revelation teach that he is everywhere present? That is a great and glorious truth; but our faith cannot sustain itself upon that alone. We need something more. Shall we regard him as enthroned in unapproachable glory in the highest heavens? This, too, is right; "for thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place." Had this been all that he could say of his dwelling-place, we might admire, but we could not worship, we could not trust, we could not love, we could not hope. Such a being would

be too high for us. We could not reach him. But, blessed be his name, he has one other dwelling-place. "I dwell," says he, "in the high and holy place; WITH HIM ALSO THAT IS OF A CONTRITE AND HUMBLE SPIRIT;" and in this dwelling-place, even in our hearts, we meet with him and he with us. Here it is that we enter into covenant with him; here it is that our fellowship is with him and with his Son Jesus Christ; here it is that we sup with him and he with us; here it is that we are taken into the relation of children, and in virtue of his dwelling with us and in us we obtain the unspeakable privilege of calling him "our Father." The Saviour says, "If a man love me, he will keep my ways; and my Father will love him, and WE will come unto him and make our abode with him." Let the Deist boast of his lofty religion; but can he find any thing in it like this? With the Christian he can believe in a Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity; but can he realize in that Lofty One a kind and loving God who has taken up his abode with him as a Friend and Guest? "Behold," says He who is the first and the last, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come to him and sup with him and he

with me." Think of the intimate fellowship of two friends supping together, the one the guest of the other, and then remember that this is the image chosen by Infinite Wisdom to set forth the close and endearing communion to which he admits and invites us.

While we are on earth, God must come to us, if there is to be any communion between us, for we cannot go to him in his high and holy place. In infinite mercy and condescension he does come to us; and we know that in his own good time, after his gracious work of sanctification shall be completed, he will take us up to his high and holy place, where we shall "see him as he is."

It is good to "see God in clouds and hear him in the wind;" it is good to contemplate his glory in the visible heavens and in his handiwork on this beautiful earth; it is good to meditate upon him as enthroned in that holy place towards which our highest aspirations tend; but, oh, it is life from the dead to realize that he dwells with us and in us. I know that faith staggers at this wonderful truth, although the strongest terms and the most striking figures are used again and again to declare it and set it forth, so that we may have the fullest assurance of the glorious fact.

Even Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, exclaimed, in a transport of adoration and wonder, "Will God in very deed dwell with man!" But it never entered into Solomon's heart to conceive the glorious truths which have since his day been revealed to man from the lips of Him whose very name is "GOD WITH US."

"I will trust and not be afraid."

THESE precious words are found in the 2d verse of the 12th chapter of Isaiah. They are part of a triumphant song of praise to be sung in "that day" when the prophecy with which it stands connected shall be fulfilled in the universal triumph of the gospel. But the words express a sentiment always proper to the truly believing heart. The Psalmist, in drawing the moral portrait of a good man, says of him, "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; his heart is established, he shall not be afraid." (cxii. 7, 8.) How beautifully does this declaration harmonize with the prophetic song of Isaiah!

It may seem to us that it was easy for

Isaiah and David to exercise and enjoy the trust their language expresses. Somehow the idea often steals upon us that there was something peculiar in the faith of the holy men of old; that they were blessed with higher privileges and admitted to more intimate communion with God than are Christians of the present day. But it is not a correct idea. If, dear reader, you are really a believer in Jesus, then are you just as truly beloved by the Father as were any of those good men. Your faith and theirs is the same in kind, though it may differ in degree. Their superior privileges consisted in the fact that God was pleased to make them the mediums of the revelation of his will, and not in any superior blessings of personal salvation. They were washed in the same blood, sanctified by the same Spirit, and thus became heirs of the same inheritance. In nothing pertaining to personal blessings and privileges had they the slightest pre-eminence over the true believer who is now living; nor were they warranted to rest in God with more confidence than any who may read these words.

"I will *trust*." I will believe; I will rely upon his promises; I will take him at his

word; "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God: in him will I trust." The 23d Psalm is all made up of the outpouring of a trusting heart. It embraces every thing, from daily bread to the glories and felicities of heaven. Its language covers time and eternity, body and soul, life and death; and there is not an expression in it which the humble believer may not appropriate to himself and utter with an unfaltering tongue. This psalm expresses the language of true faith, of well-founded confidence, of that "hope which maketh not ashamed," and which becomes firmer the more it is tried. It is founded upon that rock upon which Jesus says the wise man built his house, against which the rain and floods and winds beat in vain.

The trust above spoken of is the trust of him who KNOWS in whom he believes. It is not the blind or presumptuous trust in which too many indulge. Some persons *presume* that because God is good, therefore he will not be strict to mark iniquity. They know and acknowledge that they are sinners: still they hope in some way to be saved, they know not how; still they trust, partly in themselves, partly in the Saviour, and partly

in they know not what and do not care to examine too narrowly. Such trust as this never results in true peace and joy. Its highest achievement is a stupid quietness of conscience, except in some cases, where the mind is strongly excited by surrounding enthusiasm and is sympathetically aroused, there may be a brief season of lively but presumptuous faith and a gleam of spurious joy.

We are commanded to be ever prepared to give a *reason* for the hope that is in us, both to others and to ourselves. "Examine yourselves," says the apostle, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." For this great work God has furnished us with abundance of rules and marks and guides; and it is our duty not to stop until we arrive at a certain, unquestionable conclusion; for, until we do so, we cannot "trust and *not be afraid.*"

When the disciples, together with their Lord, were overtaken in the Sea of Galilee, in the night, with a terrible tempest, which threatened every moment to engulf them, they became greatly alarmed. But when Jesus awoke he rebuked them for their fears and their want of faith. "Why are ye so

fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" But, it may be said, Christ was in the ship: therefore it could not be lost, and they were really in no danger. This is very true; but the Saviour was no nearer to them than he is to us, and no more able or solicitous to preserve them than he is to preserve us. Jesus slept then; and this doubtless increased the alarm of the disciples; but he does not sleep now. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber; behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." (Ps. cxxi.) Now, doubting Christian, take these words and respond to them in the language of the 23d Psalm, and then see if you cannot say, with as much firmness and holy confidence as did any of the old worthies, "I will trust and not be afraid." If Christ be in you, (and he is, unless you be a reprobate,) that is better than merely to be in the same ship with him; if

Christ be in you, you have nothing to fear; "there shall no evil befall thee."

But, says the trembling soul, *I am afraid of myself.* That is right, but not quite correctly expressed. You mean, you *distrust* yourself. In that you are correct, and can hardly run to excess; but you have no reason to be *afraid* of yourself. "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul." Surely when he says he will preserve thee from all evil he does not omit that greatest of all evils, a corrupt, unstable, deceitful heart. By his providence he will develop its hidden evils, but only that they may be overcome and eradicated.

Such brief and energetic sentences as this which we have set at the head of this article ought to be treasured in the mind of all Christians, to be ready in every time of need. They serve at once to embody the thoughts we wish to cherish and to suppress the risings of doubts and fears. They are applicable to every possible circumstance of an alarming nature. They furnish the Holy Spirit with the means wherewith he operates upon our hearts; for it is his work to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and to bring to our remembrance whatsoever he has said

unto us. There is not a day but we need to use these words, if we would keep our souls in peace and assure our hearts before him. How beautifully simple are the words, and yet how sublime! How befitting the lips of a timid, weak, but loving and confiding child! How honouring and well-pleasing to our Almighty Father, from whom we learn to utter them while we run under his sheltering wings! How soothing in the day of trouble, and how consolatory in those periods, well known to every experienced Christian, when God hides his face and leaves us to walk in darkness! And in view of the last and greatest trial, when the gloom of the valley of the shadow of death rises as a dark cloud before us, and Nature instinctively shrinks affrighted, oh then to be able to say, with David, "I shall fear no evil," or, in the words of Isaiah, "I will trust and not be afraid!"

Mr. A— and the Universalist.

One short sentence from the lips of the Saviour has greater power over the prejudices and errors of the human heart than the most elaborate arguments of the most gifted minds. But it requires more humility and self-denial than most of us are possessed of to sink ourselves entirely out of sight and fight only with the sword of the Spirit.

Rev. Mr. N——, in his missionary travels through the western part of New York, came to a village where there was a society of Universalists whose preacher was a man of great zeal and fond of controversy. He tried various expedients to draw Mr. N—— into a debate; but the latter avoided him. One day, however, they met by accident, and were introduced to each other. The Universalist would not let the opportunity slip.

"Well, Mr. N——," said he, "I am one of those who hold that all will be saved."

"I am aware of it," said Mr. N——

"And I think I can convince you that the doctrine is true," said the Universalist.

"I will hear you, sir," said Mr. N——.

The other then entered upon the usual arguments in support of such views, receiving an attentive hearing on the part of Mr. N——, until he had said all that he wished to say.

"I have but one reply to make to all that," said Mr. N——, looking him earnestly in the face.

"Well, sir, what is it?" said the Universalist.

"*Except you repent you will perish.*"

The reply sorely nonplussed the other. He complained that Mr. N—— had not met the case; but, being assured by the latter that he had nothing else to say, he rallied and put forth some further arguments, being determined, if possible, to draw him out. Mr. N—— heard him quietly until he was through, and again said, "I have but one reply to make to all that."

The other paused to hear what it would be, when Mr. N—— solemnly repeated the awful words, "*Except you repent you will perish.*"

"Why," said the wounded man,—for the sword of the Spirit had pierced him deeply,—"you will not argue at all."

"I have nothing more to say," quietly observed Mr. N——.

After a short pause the Universalist turned to leave the room.

"Stop, my friend," said Mr. N——: "I wish to say to you that there is one thing that you will not be able to forget."

"What is that, sir?" he asked.

"*Except you repent you will lose your soul!*"

A bitter smile of incredulity was the only reply to this last remark; and Mr. N—— saw nothing more of him that day.

On the following day the Universalist called upon Mr. N—— and expressed a wish to have more conversation. "No," said the latter; "I do not wish for any more conversation with you."

"Oh, sir," said the other, "I have not come to argue with you. You were right yesterday when you told me that there was one thing I would not be able to forget. I feel that it is true, that except I repent I must perish; and I have come to ask you *what I must do to be saved.*"

"My dear friend," said Mr. N——, "if that be the way, I shall be happy to talk with you as long as you please." And they did talk together and pray together; and the

result was that the Universalist became a happy believer and a preacher of the truth which he had previously laboured to pervert and destroy.

Now, my object in writing out this anecdote is not to afford the reader a few minutes' amusement, but to impress upon his mind and my own that the thousands of errors and heresies which lurk in the depraved hearts of sinners are not to be dislodged by our logic or our reasonings. In fact, the votaries of error love to encounter us, as this zealous Universalist sought to encounter Mr. N——; but they cannot endure those living words which fell from the lips of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life. Mr. N——, by sinking himself, honoured his Saviour and was instrumental in saving a soul from death.

The Mr. N—— spoken of in the foregoing article was the Rev. HERMAN NORTON, late Corresponding Secretary of the American and Foreign Christian Union, —a man who laboured long and wore himself out in his Master's service. He was a man of superior talents and a most devoted Christian. The article was written and published during his lifetime; but now, since his death, there is, I think, no indelicacy in inserting this note, nor in saying that I had the anecdote from his own lips.

Noah's Dove.

All under the whole heavens had for months been one waste of waters,—the very image of turbulence, desolation, and death. Notwithstanding the promises of his God, who had been so very good to him, and in spite of the workings of his well-tried faith, the heart of Noah would sink within him, and the exclamation would often rise to his lips, "O Lord, how long?" At length the time of deliverance drew near. The ark was grounded upon the lofty summit of Ararat. Noah opened a window and sent forth a dove. After traversing the hideous waste until her tired pinions could no longer sustain her, she returned to the ark, to the kind and faithful hand that sent her forth.

Noah's dove, in her first effort, is a lively emblem of the prayer of faith for a world overwhelmed with the floods of iniquity: it explores the gloomy expanse, but can find no place upon which to rest the sole of her feet.

Weary and sad at the prospect, it returns to the bosom of him who sent it forth.

So is it with him who is in Christ, the ark of safety, while making the voyage of life. Like Noah's dove, he is sent forth to wander over a sin-ruined world; but in it he can find nothing upon which he can rest his hopes or his affections. Like the dove, he returns to the ark, saying, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

Noah also sent forth a raven; but in the vestiges of death and destruction everywhere found upon the troubled surface of the great deep it found its appropriate food, *and it returned no more to the ark.* Oh, what a striking emblem does this foul bird afford of him who forsakes God and gluts his depraved appetite on the sinful pleasures and profits of this evil world!

Again Noah sends forth the dove, as again the Christian will send forth the prayer of faith. What is this she bears back to the now joyful patriarch? "Lo, in her mouth an olive-leaf plucked off!" It was a little thing, but a glorious harbinger of good. It spoke of life and peace. It was like the angel's song, "Glory to God in the highest;

on earth peace, good will to men." Noah was glad; hope sprang exulting in his desponding soul. So is the Christian glad when the prayer of faith brings back an answer of peace.

Dear reader, I have but glanced at this beautiful emblem. Follow it up. Let the example of Noah stimulate you to send forth doves over this sin-deluged world. They will return to you with blessings, with emblems of life and love and peace,—peace to your own soul, peace to a ransomed world.

Jerusalem.

This is a name around which cluster a world of sacred and solemn associations. David and Solomon, and a long line of Judean kings, lived and laboured and died in Jerusalem. Prophets and priests, long since numbered with the dead, fulfilled their high missions there, and their writings have given to that ancient city a freshness, an immortality, unlike that of any other.

There Jesus laboured and taught more than

in any other city; and there he was rejected and by wicked hands was crucified and slain. Thus his precious name became associated with that of Jerusalem so closely that we can hardly think of the one without the other.

When Messiah was cut off,—when he had put an end to the sacrificial worship by his one great offering,—the mission of Jerusalem seemed to be accomplished. It died with him, and soon after it was swept as with the besom of destruction.

Jerusalem was the city of the Great King. His glory was its glory; and when he had finished his work and left it, it sunk into darkness and contempt. No king ever afterwards held his court there; no prophet's voice was ever again heard in its streets, and no sweet singer after his departure awoke its echoes with his lofty praise.

Literal Jerusalem is dead; but there is a living Jerusalem, which is still the city of the Great King. Heaven is called Jerusalem, and rightly so, for it too is the city of the Great King. But we are speaking of earth. "Where is Jerusalem?" says the eloquent and gifted Krummacher. "Where tears of mourning after God start into the eye; where the knee and the heart are bowed at the

throne of grace; where the hands of faith are lifted to the cross, and lips of sincerity utter their prayers and praise,—there is Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem! Oh, it is good to be within thy walls, to sit together as fellow-citizens, according to the privilege of the new birth; to sing together in the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord in the midst of us; to speak one with another upon faith's bright prospects that lie before us; to number up our joys with which the stranger intermeddleth not; or to place ourselves at the windows toward the east, and breathe the morning air of the everlasting day and refresh ourselves with thoughts of the blissful futurity that awaits us. 'Oh, Jerusalem, if I forget thee, let my right hand forget its cunning!'"

Next to the name of Jesus, that of Jerusalem is sweet to the ear and heart of a believer, for it speaks of goodness and mercy in ages past; it is expressive of the Church, the city of our God, now existing and growing up under the light of his countenance; it is an emblem of the renewed heart, a temple of the Holy Ghost; and it is but another name for that city whose builder and maker is God, —our eternal home. If we are in Christ,

then behind us, around us, and before us is Jerusalem. "Here," says God, "is my rest forever; here will I dwell." Where? He inhabiteth eternity. He dwells in the high and holy place; but with him also "who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and who trembles at his word;" and where God dwells there is Jerusalem.

Yes, literal Jerusalem is dead. In its gloomy streets the inhabitants glide about more like ghosts than men, and in its places of prayer are heard only the mummery and mutterings of dead forms; but of the spiritual Jerusalem glorious things have been spoken, and in it glorious things have been and will be done. In that great day of revival when the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, then shall the entire Church behold what John saw in vision,—the "New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

Life and Death.

God is the fountain of life. Union with him is life to us; separation is death. Adam sinned, and thus separated himself from God. Spiritual death followed as an inevitable consequence. It was impossible that it could be otherwise. He was a spiritual suicide. He—not God—inflicted death upon his soul; and then, in infinite wisdom and goodness, God inflicted death upon his body, as the only possible way in which the soul could be restored to life. It has the appearance of severity; but in nothing except the unspeakable gift of his only-begotten Son is his mercy more strikingly displayed. Think, if you can grasp the hideous thought, of sinful men living forever! I cannot conceive of any thing more terrible. No death in the world, then no Saviour could have died. No natural death, then earth and hell would have been one and the same thing; the blackness of darkness forever would have settled down upon the whole race.

Can we thank God for the infliction of natural death? Surely we can. Like all *his* works, it is "VERY GOOD." I love to view it as the first in the great work of redemption; as the first expression of the loving kindness of our heavenly Father.

The death of the body, then, according to this view, is a blessing. Yes. Is it a blessing to all? It is, so far as it opens a door of hope to all. But, like all other blessings, it may be converted, by obstinate unbelief and impenitency, into a curse. To the believer, to him who has fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel, it is an unspeakable blessing. To him "*to die is gain.*" The death of the sinful, sinning nature restores him to perfect spiritual life in Christ; and, through death, even it will be raised again at the last day in glory, honour, and immortality.

I think these are wholesome and scriptural views of this solemn subject. I am aware that many regard the sentence passed upon man in Eden as the act of a severe and inexorable Judge rather than that of a kind and merciful Father. But it is a gloomy, cheerless, and, I think, erroneous view. It ought never to be separated in thought from the great work of human salvation; for it

constituted an indispensable part of it. In it "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other."

In the antediluvian world human life was extended to several centuries, and men conversed with their descendants to the seventh generation. As all knowledge, historical, religious, and scientific, had then to be transmitted orally, there seemed to be a necessity for this great length of life.

To us such length of days would seem like immortality. But what was the moral effect of this longevity? Although under an economy of grace, although the Holy Spirit strove with them, and a few holy men faithfully warned them to flee from the wrath to come, yet "all flesh corrupted his way before God;" "the earth was filled with violence;" and God declared that Noah was the only righteous man in that generation. Bad as the world is now, bad as its state has been at any time since the flood, such universal apostasy never occurred at any subsequent period.

The reduction of human life to one-tenth of what it was before the flood is therefore a merciful dispensation. Although men live but a few years now, yet Providence has surrounded them with such marvellous fa-

cilities for the acquisition and transmission of knowledge that they are able to avail themselves of longer and more varied experience than the antediluvians. Enoch conversed with Adam, and Noah with Enoch; but we can converse, by means of written truth, with Adam, and Enoch, and Noah, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Moses, and Samuel, and David, with kings and prophets, who, though dead, yet speak. We can follow Him who went about doing good, and hear the gracious words that issued from his lips. We can stand with Paul on Mars' Hill, and share in the wondrous visions of John in Patmos. The great drama of the Reformation we can cause to be re-enacted as often as we please; and the mighty movements of our own time are all brought as it were under our eye. Talk of the great experience of Methuselah—it was nothing to that of the well-informed man of our own day.

"*I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*" When the Saviour uttered these words, he immediately made the emphatic inquiry, "*Believest thou this?*" And well may we put the same inquiry to our own

hearts. The declaration is so at variance with our carnal or natural sense, so different from the common current of our ideas, that few—perhaps none—believe it in that strong, realizing sense that the obvious import of the words require.

What, then, is life,—the life here spoken of by the Saviour? It is not natural life,—the life we live here in the flesh. It is something else. It is that life restored to us which was lost in Eden. It is more. It is a partaking of the life of Christ himself. It is not only life in a higher sense than Adam possessed it, but a confirmation in it by all the guarantees that infinite faithfulness and power can throw around it. Adam died; but "HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE." He is united to Christ, one with him; therefore, "as I live, he shall live also." This blessed state is elsewhere called "newness of life;" a life essentially different from that of mere creatures; a life not inherent, but derived, not in ourselves, but in Christ.

The moment the soul is united to Christ by faith, this life begins. To him the Saviour's words may be applied, "He shall never die." To him that change which God in mercy inflicts upon his sinful flesh is no longer death

It is a change,—a change from which the flesh recoils, but in which the soul exults. It is death, or dissolution, to the one; it is life to the other. This is the view Jesus desires us to take of it. It is a change,—a change from imperfect to perfect life; from a body of sin and death to fulness of life; from danger and strife to security and peace; from partial evil to perfect good.

This life, this spiritual, eternal life, begins the moment a sinner believes in Christ. He eats of that bread which came down from heaven; he drinks of that living water of which the Saviour spoke to the woman at the well. He can hunger no more, neither can he thirst any more; for he has within him "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is not that he shall hereafter be put in possession of the great boon of eternal life, but he is already in possession of it. He "will never die."

By putting off the idea of eternal life to a future state of existence, we rob ourselves of much comfort and joy, and fail to glorify God. In nothing else is the obstinacy of our unbelief more strikingly exhibited than in this. And why is it? It is because we esteem ourselves to be flesh rather than

spirit. We esteem the soul to be an appendage to the body, rather than that the body is an appendage to the soul. We all, to be sure, acknowledge the spirit of man to be the more excellent part; but this abstract acknowledgment is one thing, our habitual thought or *feeling* is a very different thing. The mortal body is always present to the mind; the immortal soul only occasionally. The wants and desires of the one afford the spring to almost all our actions; the other only receives attention when the clamours of its rival are quieted. Is it not so? Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that when I say "*me*" I chiefly mean my corporal frame, *together with those thinking faculties which it has brought into thraldom?* When I say, "I live," I mean my animal life; and when I speak of death, it is not necessary to say I mean the death of the body. Thus we habitually talk, which proves that thus we habitually think; and thus that greater and more excellent life which Jesus purchased is thrust out of mind.

It is not what we know, what we have learned, what we believe, that gives character to the mind; but it is what fills the mind, what it loves to cherish,—in one word, what we love. If we are partakers of that

new life, it will struggle to bring every thought into captivity to Christ; and it will succeed. The "true riches" will overcome the perishing vanities of time and sense; the soul will gain the ascendency over the body, and thus all things be brought into that order, harmony, and beauty that reigned before sin entered into the world.

Eternal life is only the continuation and perfection of spiritual life. Even in this life it is far beyond what eye had seen, or ear heard, or the heart of the natural man conceived. Paul speaks of "joy unspeakable and full of glory." What, then, must that state be wherein we shall be like the glorified Redeemer and "see him as he is;" when "the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall lead his people to fountains of living water, and God himself shall wipe all tears from their eyes;" when every faculty of the soul shall be brought into perfect harmony with the divine will; when all desirable knowledge shall be opened freely to the ever-growing, ever-expanding mind; when we shall dwell in a world of vast population, all holy, all kind and affectionate, all happy and intent on diffusing happiness around them, where heart will knit to heart in ever-during

harmony, and all unite in one song of praise "to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever;" where nothing can annoy, nothing alarm? The life and bliss of the inhabitants will be as firm and lasting as the throne of God; they being indeed his beloved children, whom he has created, and redeemed, and brought home to himself. Then will the Saviour's prayer be fully answered:—"*Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.*"

And is this the destiny of the Christian? It is; and ten thousand times more than tongue or pen can express. It is; we *know* it is, but we do not *believe* it. Our lives, our tempers, our petty cares, prove that we do not practically believe it, that we do not realize it as we ought. Possessors of eternal life, and yet careful and troubled about the fleeting things of a day! Joint heirs with Christ to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, and yet, it may be, striving with a fellow-heir about some trifle of this world's goods! Children of God, and yet afraid that he will not give us what we need for the present life! Pilgrims and strangers upon earth, yet more

concerned about the provisions and amusements of the way than what awaits us at the end of our journey! Such is the sad picture of many who are really heirs of eternal life.

But eternal life belongs to those, and those only, who are in Christ. Those who are out of Christ are heirs of a far different inheritance.

"Oh, what eternal horrors hang
Around the second death!"

They are spiritually dead while in this life; "without hope and without God in the world." The body dies, and the soul passes into a state of eternal death. We have defined death to be a state of separation from God. As in this life the saint is not separated from all evil, so the sinner in this life is not separated from all good. But in the eternal state the separation in both cases is complete. In heaven, God is love, and his approving smile diffuses ineffable bliss throughout its bright and peaceful mansions; so in hell "our God is a consuming fire," and that awfully holy and reproving Presence, from which the lost soul can never escape, will constitute the chief ingredient in his bitter cup. So it is sometimes felt to be even before the spirit departs. "O thou blasphemed yet indulgent

Lord God Almighty," said the dying Altamont, "hell itself would be a refuge could it hide me from thy frown!" As in heaven all is love, so in hell all is hate,—intense, malignant hate, of which we can form no conception. As in heaven all is harmony, so in hell all is discord. In heaven the anthems of praise will never cease; so hell will resound with everlasting blasphemy, varied only with "wailing and gnashing of teeth." This is eternal death. Reflection upon it now, even though it harrow the soul, may be salutary, and induce us to flee from the wrath to come.

"Lord God of truth and grace,
Teach us that death to shun."

The Heart.

In the complex mechanism of the human mind, God has made the AFFECTIONS the living, governing principle, the motive power. Even the understanding is a subordinate power, and is carried by the affections whithersoever they will. This great living, moving, govern-

ing power is in the Scriptures denominated the HEART. "With the heart man believes," with the heart he obeys, and to the heart the Holy Spirit directs his appeals.

No true religious knowledge can ever reach the understanding except through the heart. Love and obedience, a willing subjection of the heart to Christ, is the first step in Christian life; and then, and not before, true light will break into the understanding,—warm, living, life-giving light, light that will cause the subject of it to grow in grace and to OBEY the truth. Then, and only then, will the Saviour's words be realized in him, "If a man will do my works, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." This is a precious promise, and, like the words of Him who uttered it, it sheds light all around it. As a declaration, it shows us the true source and medium of light; as a promise, it relieves the mind from that anxiety with which it is so apt to be filled, arising from a thousand questions of doubtful disputation. And how sweetly it accords with the promise uttered by the Psalmist!—"To the upright light shall arise in darkness."

Mary's heart was right when she sat at the feet of Jesus, and she loved and enjoyed the

light which he shed around him. The understandings of the Pharisees were not at fault, while their hearts hated and fled from the same light. With minds full of religious knowledge, they "sat in darkness." Are there no such people now?

We often hear addresses from the pulpit, learned, logical, and sound, but so cold and lifeless that the heart is perfectly unaffected. Such preaching is an attempt to invert the order of the Christian warfare. With the heart man contends with his Maker. The heart is the great rebel, not the head. The heart is supreme: the understanding is subordinate, and is dragged or led whithersoever the heart dictates. Let that rebel, and all is in rebellion; let that be captured, and all is brought into captivity; let that be in darkness, and all is dark; let that be enlightened, and all is light. The heart is the *king of Israel.*

When Ahab went out with his army to fight with the King of Syria, the latter issued a singular order:—"*Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel.*" The order was a wise one, as the sequel proved. An arrow pierced and slew the king, and all his followers and supporters

fled. Let this, therefore, become a standing order in the Christian camp; for while the King of Israel lives and fights we can make no impression upon the host of his followers and supporters.

Heaven—Its Attractions.

The weary love to dwell upon the thought of heaven as a place of rest; the sorrowful, as a place of joy; the troubled soul longs for it as a state of peace and repose; the poor and needy look forward to it as a place where every want shall be supplied and they shall be filled with all the fulness of God; and the ardent Christian longs for its glory and beauty and lofty praise. These are all right. But there is one other character whose aspirations are more fervent than any of these: it is the sin-burdened soul who longs for it as a place of holiness. To him its rest, its peace, its fulness, and its glory, are delightful thoughts; but the glorious anticipation that there he shall be free from sin is the most joyful of all. To enjoy the blessed privilege

of joining in that song "to Him that WASHED us in his blood" is to him the sweetest hope that clusters around the thought of heaven. While thinking of it, he loves to sing,—

"There we shall see his face,
And *never, never sin.*"

The nearer we get to heaven, the more ardent will be our longings for this greatest of all the blessings of salvation. Cowper, near the close of his sweet but sorrowful life, bursts out, in triumph at this thought,—

"When that happy era begins,
When array'd in his glory I shine,
And no longer pierce with my sins
The bosom on which I recline."

When the angel announced to Mary the great fact that she was chosen to be the mother of the Saviour, he said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins." He did not say that he should save his people from the wrath of God, from eternal death, from the punishment they justly merited, but from their sins. The great thing in salvation, and that which carries every thing else with it, is the change from a sinful to a holy nature; and the love of God, the glories and joys of heaven, all follow as necessary concomitants.

Christian, is this your chief desire, is this the sweetest ingredient in your hope of heaven? or have you merely some vague idea of happiness, without connecting with it the idea of holiness? It is a vain hope. There can be no peace, no rest, no joy, without holiness. None but the pure in heart can see God or dwell in his presence. Let this be your prayer:—"*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*" Let this sweet and beautiful aspiration ever be the language of your heart, whether you express it audibly or not; and then you may hope to grow in meetness for heaven.

Heaven—A Local Habitation.

An interesting proof of the truth of the religion of the Bible is the style in which the sacred writers treat this subject. They do not attempt a literal description of the heavenly world. Even the Son of God himself, who dwelt there from eternity, did not attempt it. And Paul, who was caught up and favoured with a sight of the Paradise of

God and heard its language and its music, did not. He says he heard "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter," and this is all that he can tell us. Jesus speaks of it as his Father's house, in which are many mansions,—a real and substantial habitation; and in another place he says, "Great is your reward IN heaven," which still carries with it the idea of a home or habitation, a dwelling-place. But most of these expressions are figures drawn from the familiar things of earth,—things which most nearly resemble that of which he spoke.

When Paul exclaimed, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," he doubtless had heaven in his mind, and speaks of it as not only indescribable, but inconceivable. John, in the 21st and 22d chapters of Revelation, in the strongest imagery which earth can afford, speaks of its outward adornments under the image of a city. In this sublime aggregation of figures he groups together all that is pure, beautiful, brilliant, and imperishable in this world, to set forth the unfading glories of that. He could go no further; nor could we follow him if he had.

Mohammed, in his Koran, on the other hand, gives a very minute and circumstantial account of his Paradise; and, as the stream could not rise higher than the fountain, it consists altogether of objects with which he was acquainted, monstrously exaggerated, and of sensual delights, in which the coarsest and most corrupt of men could participate, and from which the pure and holy would turn away in disgust.

The Buddhists—the followers of a teacher who lived about a thousand years before Christ, from whom they take their name, and who this day far outnumber those who bear the name of Christ, both Catholic and Protestant—have no heaven in their belief. They hold that the human soul is an emanation from Deity; and that, after death, it will again be united to matter and subjected to the miseries of life, unless the individual to whom it belongs, by the attainment of wisdom through prayer and contemplation, shall succeed in liberating it from that necessity, and secure its absorption into that divine essence from which it sprung. Their gloomy faith affords no higher hope than that of flitting from one suffering, dying body to another, or of being absorbed,—lost, as to

personal identity and consciousness, even as a drop of rain is lost in the ocean. A gloomy prospect! How unlike the glorious hopes set before us in the gospel! "I go to prepare a place for you," says Jesus; "and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Again he says, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." John exclaims, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Even John could not tell what we should be in heaven, further than this,—that we should be like HIM. That was enough. And we shall be in him,—not swallowed up, lost, annihilated, forgotten, but continuing forever in the full enjoyment of distinct personal identity,—and he in us.

We are clearly taught to regard heaven as a place, a world, a city whose Builder and Maker is God, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Now, while these expressions all denote that it has a substantial, material existence, yet, from the fact

that so many figures are used to represent it, we may infer that none of them, and that indeed nothing in this world, is adequate to convey a proper idea of it. It is surpassingly glorious and beautiful. "There is no night there." It has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God and the Lamb is the light thereof.

This earth, cursed as it is, and the abode of sin and sorrow, is nevertheless exceedingly beautiful, as it rolls its verdant and diversified bosom to the source of its light and life, and then majestically turns away into the shade of night, that we may see the still more remote and sublime splendours of the starry heavens. What, then, must that world be where God has fixed his eternal throne and unveils to the gaze of its inhabitants his uncreated glory and beauty?

Of the joys and employments of heaven we are able to form more adequate conceptions than we can of its appearance and outward adornments; for whoever has rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and felt the love of God like a flood filling his heart, has tasted of the joys of heaven. It is the same in kind; it differs only in degree. "His servants shall serve him." They will delight to do

his will. They shall be like the angels, who are ministering spirits, and like Christ, who went about doing good. At the same time, grateful homage will ever arise "to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever."

As on earth there is a great diversity of tastes, talents, capacities, and spiritual gifts, so we may believe there is in heaven. Even the angels, the natives of that bright and holy world, although we know but little of their personal character and history, appear to differ from each other in character and office. Although equally holy and happy, and serving with equal fidelity and zeal their great Master and King, yet even we, little as we know of them, can see a marked distinction of rank in what is revealed of them. So, doubtless, will the redeemed ones from earth differ, not only in personal traits and fitness for certain service, but also in rank and degrees of glory, even as one star differeth from another star in glory.

Resurrection of the Body.

"I WILL praise thee," says David, "for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;" and every pious heart must respond to the sentiment. It has pleased God to give to man a being wonderfully complex. In him the natures of the lower animals are found incorporated with those of the highest spiritual intelligences. "A worm! a god!" is the exclamation of Dr. Young, while endeavouring to give utterance to his impressions of the nature of man. In him one nature is found blended with another; and the careful student of man will not fail to find in the human conformation and character types of almost every species of the lower animated creation; and when we contemplate the mental and moral varieties found among mankind, we may confidently infer that man, in his spiritual nature, is also allied to every order of spiritual and intelligent existence.

But a greater and more wonderful fact than

any of these is clearly and explicitly revealed, —even that God himself took upon him a mortal body and was "manifest in the flesh." Well might the apostle exclaim, "Great is the mystery of godliness!" whilst contemplating that glorious Being in whose nature is incorporated all that is in man, all that is in God. This union of spirit with flesh and of God with man ennobles all, glorifies all, immortalizes all. So related, so allied, so blended in being with the immortal spirit and with the Father of spirits, the body of the believer in Christ can never perish. Christ's body rose and lives, and will live forever; and, when he was on earth, he said, "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should RAISE IT UP AGAIN AT THE LAST DAY." This certainly has reference to the bodies of his people; for he says, in another place, "The hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." This awful declaration is so plain and emphatic that I shall cite no further proofs of the doctrine, although

numberless scriptures might be quoted in corroboration.

That the disembodied spirit of man lives and enjoys or suffers according as its moral character may be, is a truth plainly taught in the Scriptures. Paul speaks of being *absent from the body, but present with the Lord;* and he says it, not as if he were enunciating a new and strange doctrine, but merely alluding to a familiar truth. Jesus said to the penitent thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;" but certainly his body was not in Paradise, for it only filled a felon's grave. Neither was the body of Jesus that day in Paradise. They, therefore, met there as disembodied spirits. Again: "The rich man died *and was buried,* and in hell he lifted up his eyes." Let these citations suffice to prove that doctrine.

But redemption is incomplete until the body is delivered from the power of death. The disembodied spirit of the believer doubtless will be happy beyond the power of expression to set forth; but still that state must necessarily be imperfect; and we cannot believe otherwise than that the soul of the just man in heaven looks forward with earnest expectation to that day which shall

reunite him with that other part of his nature which still lies under the curse of a broken law.

Paul lays great stress upon the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; and none of the sacred writers so often and so pointedly speak of it. Every Christian reader is familiar with what he says on the subject, so that I need not quote his language, except so far as may be necessary in the discussion of this most interesting subject. "It is sown," says he, "a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." What a spiritual *body* is, is to our present imperfect comprehension a profound mystery; but the apostle throws as much light upon it as it is possible to do when he says that the bodies of believers will be like the glorious body of their risen Lord. That body was material and substantial; for he said to his alarmed and incredulous disciples, on one occasion, when he appeared to them after his resurrection, "Handle me and see; for a spirit [meaning a pure, simple, disembodied spirit, or an apparition] hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." His hands, his feet, his lips and tongue, performed their appropriate functions as formerly, and "he did eat before them." All this goes to prove

the perfect restoration of the body to all its powers of action, and of course of sensation; to its capacity for enjoyment or suffering; and those powers and capacities doubtless greatly enhanced, as well as rendered indestructible and exhaustless.

But the Saviour, on several occasions, appeared in the midst of his disciples suddenly, *the doors being shut;* and several times, in the same inexplicable manner, he vanished out of their sight. How a body having flesh and bones could thus appear and disappear is beyond comprehension; for I am inclined to believe that there was no miracle wrought on these occasions, but that these mysterious movements were designed to afford us some faint conception of the nature and capabilities of a spiritual body. On these occasions he had not assumed the overpowering splendour of his heavenly glory, such as Saul, on the road to Damascus, and John, in the isle of Patmos, saw; but it was the same body he carried to heaven from the Mount of Olives, and in which he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Now, when the mind seeks to penetrate to the unseen realities of the eternal world, and endeavours to solve the mysteries of our

nature beyond the resurrection, let what we know of the risen Saviour be its guide. He walked, he ate, he held familiar intercourse with his friends and brethren; he brought every bodily sense and function into its usual activity; and yet he was different from what he was before his death. Though clothed in a substantial, material body, he acted at times as a free, unclogged spirit. Of his body it was emphatically true, "it was sown a natural body, it was raised a spiritual body." Truly, this is a great mystery; and it may be that in our present imperfect state we are not capable of understanding more than it has pleased God to reveal. In the person of Jesus, our great Forerunner and Exemplar, we have an example of the resurrection; and from it we may gather more unerring ideas than we possibly could do from any abstract revelation.

In the full blaze of this glorious doctrine, how pleasant and refreshing is the thought of death and the grave! Death is seen to be but a temporary sleep; corruption a refining process, a part in that great change which converts mortal to immortal, natural to spiritual, weakness to power.

"Corruption, earth, and worms
Shall but refine the flesh,
Till my triumphant spirit comes
To put it on afresh."

Guided by the example already cited, we may safely indulge in exulting expectation of that glorious state which awaits the Christian beyond the resurrection. Redemption will then be complete. The soul, perfectly sanctified, will once more act through the media of bodily faculties and powers. These eyes will see the King in his beauty, and these tongues hold converse with him and with all the glorious beings by whom we shall be surrounded. These hands will once more be active in the most delightful employments; and

"These feet with angel-wings shall vie,
And tread the palace of the sky."

Then we shall be like HIM who, when he was in our world, was like us. We shall see him as he is,—that is, as God manifest in the flesh, at once our God and our Brother. All that we know in this life of endearing relationships, father, brother, husband, friend, are used by the Holy Spirit to give us as strong impressions as we are capable of

receiving of the exceeding nearness and dearness of the relation which will eternally subsist between the Redeemer and his ransomed and glorified ones; and then, when every metaphor and illustration had been pressed into the service to do what they could in showing us the wonderful love of God our Saviour, it is added, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God has prepared for them that love him."

The habitual thought of death and eternity is highly salutary, provided our minds are animated and guided by a true and living faith. Faith will enable us to get a glimpse of the glory that lies beyond the gloom; and when we see that we will love to gaze at it. But until we can regard death and the grave in the light of the resurrection, they will only at times force themselves as unwelcome intruders into our minds; and it is a fact that we have the power, and are too much inclined to exercise it, of keeping such thoughts out. To do so is bad every way. There is nothing so certain as death; but if we are unwilling to think of it, then it is obvious that we cannot be prepared to meet

it. The true way is to be able so to view it as that it shall become the most delightful subject upon which we can fix our thoughts. This is a state of mind perfectly attainable, and to which thousands have attained. Let the gloom of the grave be dispelled by the glories of Immortality and the sorrows of death be swallowed up in the joys of Hope.

Endless Progress.

To the contemplative mind there is something deeply interesting in the growth of a vegetable from the germ to the utmost development of which it is capable, whether that vegetable be a plant of a single season's continuance, or a tree that lives, and thrives, and expands for centuries. Both are formed on the same general type; both possess that mysterious principle of life which lays all its surroundings under tribute and compels them to minister to its growth. Each assimilates to its own peculiar character the diverse elements which it draws from the earth, the atmosphere, and the light, in

obedience to that great law given by the Creator when he said, "Let the earth bring forth the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit, *after his kind.*"

But the herb and the tree are transient, like all things else on this earth. One generation of animals, and plants, and trees, succeeds to another at intervals more or less brief; and the most enduring may be classed among things which quickly pass away. God has established this as the law of all living things on this earth. But there is a world the distinguishing characteristic of which is ETERNAL LIFE. In that world there is life without end, growth without ceasing, development without the possibility of ever reaching a point wherein no more knowledge, or power, or glory, or holiness, or beauty, or felicity can be attained. There is but one boundary, and that can never be reached. That boundary is the infinitude of God.

Even in this imperfect state, man has many and great powers. His capacity of knowing and understanding is wonderful. His power over the elements which surround him is equally so. And his moral nature, marred, obscured, perverted, and fettered as it is by sin, is even here, both by nature and by grace,

capable of godlike manifestations. The devoted husband and wife, the filial child, the patriot hero, the suffering yet rejoicing saint, the Christian martyr,—all attest the power and beauty of those God-given capacities with which we are favoured. These we have seen, and admired, and rejoiced in. These are adapted to the life that now is, to the atmosphere of this cold and stormy world, and in some instances their development has been exceeding great. But we may safely, confidently expect that, when the "plants of righteousness" shall be transferred from this nursery to the paradise above, other faculties, other powers, other beauties, of which we have no conception, will be developed from the mysterious depths of our souls,—powers and faculties for receiving and imparting enjoyment too delicate for the rough atmosphere of earth, too glorious to bloom in this cold, dark world, too beautiful for the gaze of wicked men, and too rich to be used in the labours of this lower vineyard. It were vain, however, to conjecture what those powers and capacities are; for it is a law of our being that our experience is the limit of our ideas. We cannot go beyond, however curiously and ingeniously we may

arrange and combine our present stock of ideas.

For what we have just said, however, we have the testimony of analogy. You plant a seed,—it may be the seed of a good fruit, an apple or a pear. Now, watch the law of development. At first, two small leaves appear just above the surface of the soil; but soon you perceive that it is advancing. More leaves develop themselves, and a stem. Thus it goes on from day to day and from week to week, until its further progress is arrested by the frosts of winter. Is this death? Yes. Will it not live again? "If a man die, shall *he* live again?" We all say, yes. Will not the infant tree just spoken of live again? Yes, certainly; but not more certainly than man. Does man live more than one season in this world? Does he survive the fall of his leaf, and, after the winter of death and the grave, put forth afresh? No; but, as the tree often is, he is removed from the seed-bed during the period of suspended animation, and transferred to another place more suitable for perfect development. Now, watch the tree again. New life, or what appears to be such, begins to manifest itself; leaves more abundant, more beautiful, put

forth. By-and-by, branches appear; and presently the form and structure of a perfect tree are attained; and thus it goes on, increasing in size and vigour, until at length it puts forth flowers and fruit, and its majestic and beautiful crown, composed of multitudinous branches, is arrayed in glory and beauty. This last crowning development is, as we all know, the result of an inherent power, a power which comes into action at the proper time, and not a new power given to it for a special purpose. It was in it when the two tiny leaves burst through the crust of the earth; but who, without experience, would or could have imagined its existence then?

Behold here an image of man,—feeble and imperfect, but still an image. Among all God's creatures, in their unimaginable variety, there runs a relationship. Having one common Author, they have a family likeness, a common type, more or less traceable; and in one we never fail to find at least some analogy of the nature of all the rest. So in the powers of the mature tree we see what we have every reason to believe are bound up in our natures,—latent as yet, unknown, unimagined, but which will come forth in

due time, under the light of God's countenance, and nourished by the vital energy of the True Vine.

Another law of the vegetable world is that *while a plant lives it grows.* Growth and life terminate together. Now, think of an eternal life, a life ever young, ever vigorous, ever growing, ever progressing in the process of assimilation to the Divine Being, without the possibility of ever reaching the end of the progress or coming up to the measure of the Great Model. What thought can be more overwhelming, and yet more inspiring, than this? Think of rising, progressing eternally, higher, and higher, and higher,—

> "And better thence again, and better still,
> In INFINITE PROGRESSION!"

THE END.

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